BRITAIN'S LEADING HISTORICAL RAILWAY JOURNAL

BackTrack

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THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY IN THE 1930s

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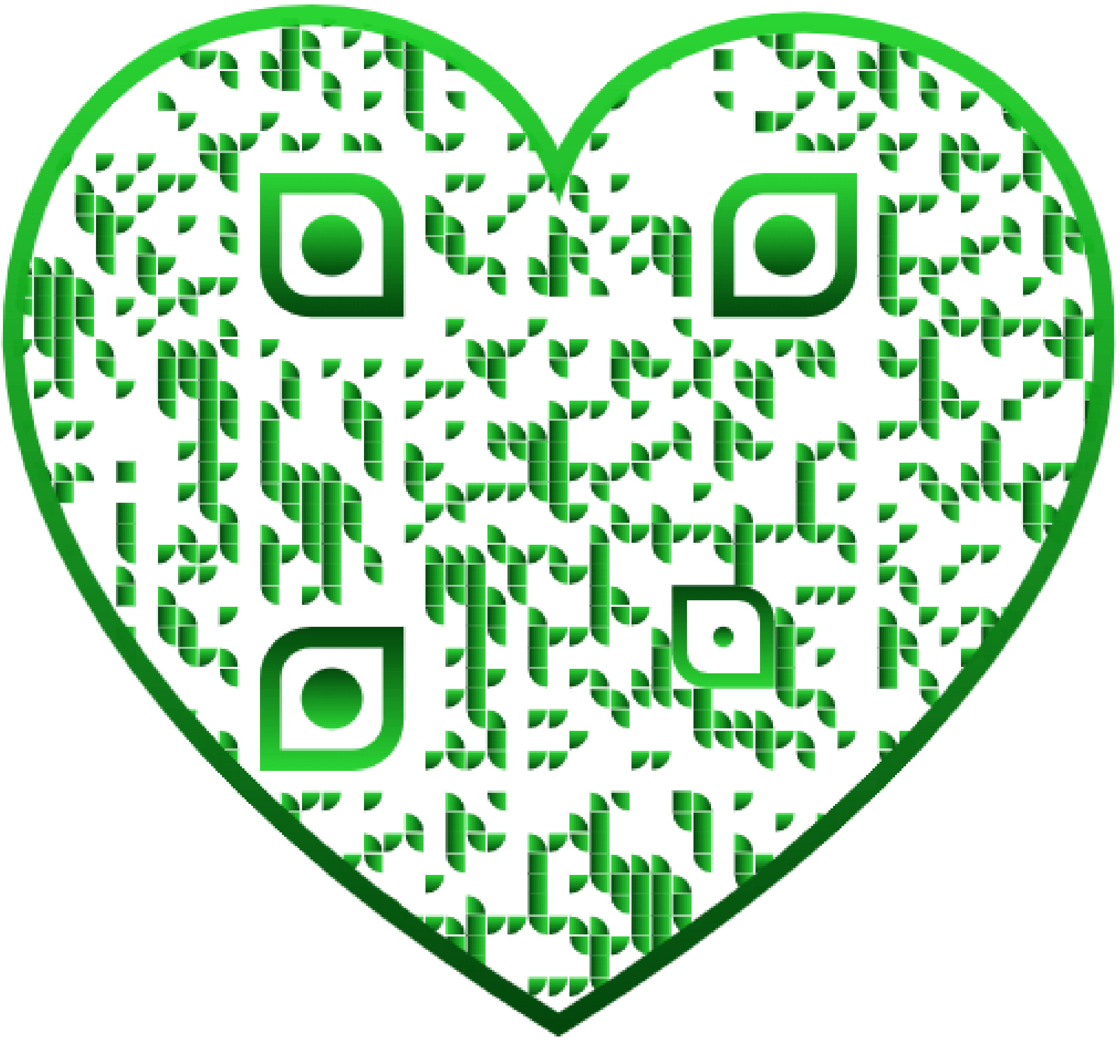

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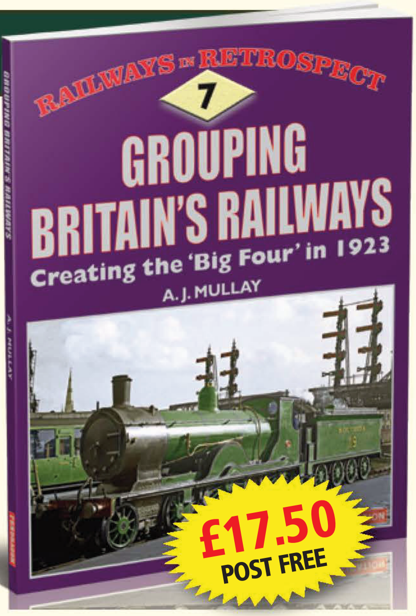

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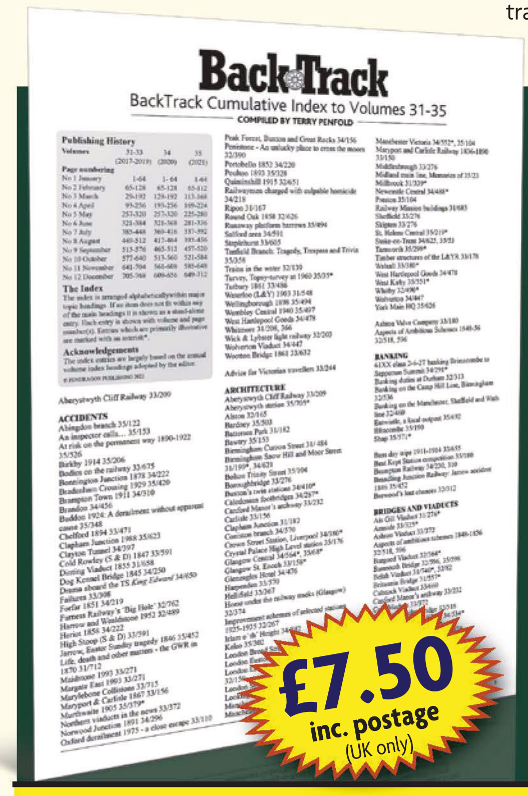

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Editorial

BackTrack
Vol. 39 · No. 12
No. 416
DECEMBER 2025
RECORDING THE HISTORY OF BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS

At the gate of the year

Once again we arrive at the turn-of-the-year moment when we look back on the completion of the latest volume of *Backtrack,* No.39. During this year we have welcomed eleven new authors to make their debuts in our pages, along with a number of new colour contributors, always encouraging moments. As usual an eclectic range of subjects has been set before an appreciative readership: the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, the 1975 Moorgate tragedy on the London Underground, the West Coast Main Line electric locomotives, the industrial railways of the North Pennines lead mines and the coke ovens of South Yorkshire, the 1921 Railways Act, the 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway and the contribution on the home front of Britain's railways to the conducting of the Boer War in far-away South Africa – just to pick out a few. Stations and locations featured have included Dumfries, Weston-super-Mare, Llandudno Junction, the Birkenhead Joint lines, Kilmarnock, Southport, Bradford, Northampton, Todmorden, places great and small from Crewe to the Isle of Man and Bishop's Waltham in rural Hampshire. Individual figures have included Henry Fowler, Dugald Drummond, Timothy Hackworth and André Chapelon (locomotive engineers), Major Francis Marindin (Board of Trade railway inspector and football referee), Sir Eric Geddes (railway manager and Minister of Transport), the Duke of Argyll (landed gentleman)... And in line with our 'broad church' attitude, more eccentric topics given an airing have included the sporting of beards by railway staff and the 'Emmet Railway', a novelty operation at the 1951 Festival of Britain. Thanks to all those who have contributed their researches and writings to *BT,* all of you – as our strapline succinctly puts it – 'Recording the history of Britain's railways'.

Volume 40 of *BT* follows swift on their heels and by the time you read this the January 2026 issue will be moving towards being ready for the printers. I'm pleased to report that during this current year a good and varied stock of new articles has been received and filed by my ever-willing assistant Samantha ready for the instruction 'Action this day'. I'm confident we shall have a good haul for the magazines of 2026.

* * * * *

During the course of a year it unfortunately falls to my lot to occasionally mark the passing of contributors who have been with us for many years: for examples Eddie Johnson in February, then in June Jeffrey Wells who at the time was our second longest-serving author. As the year closes I would like to add a name from my own family – my uncle Christopher Wasey who died in August. Chris was, like me, someone who wanted to 'do his own thing' and became a successful manufacturing businessman in Cheshire. He took a keen interest in my bid to acquire *Backtrack* and publish it independently; at the outset he was a source of encouragement and wise advice to the extent of making a generous loan at short notice which enabled me to clinch the purchase from the Atlantic company in 2003. Without that we might not be where we are now – so thanks, Chris. I acknowledged his contribution at the time in this column and am pleased to so so again now. A glass or several have been raised in so doing!

* * * * *

The Department of Administrative Affairs now wishes to address the nation... In our resolve to deliver you a magazine to the highest standards available to us, we nevertheless cannot avoid the inexorable rise in the costs of doing so. When this question has arisen before and I've been so bold as to tempt you with the options of a cheaper paper quality or more advertising within the contents, or even cut the number of pages, to keep down or perhaps reduce production costs, the reaction seems to have been in the vein of 'don't even think about it'. So that leaves us in the position of dealing with printing costs, rising postage and delivery charges and meeting fees for the ancilliary administrative activities which are necessary to run the magazine and its services; the unavoidable result is that the cost of your monthly *BT* will have to go up modestly to £5.95 from the January issue. Subscription rates will also have to rise accordingly and details will be notified when renewals fall due and in next month's magazine.

* * * * *

And so, as the sparky steam locomotive of determination chugs across the parched landscapes of drought, and the fire engines of first response follow urgently in its wake, we bring Volume 39 of *Backtrack* to a timely stop. Join us for Volume 40 and in the meantime we send our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all our readers.

Michael Blakemore

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BR 'Clan' 4-6-2 No.72000 *Clan Buchanan* departs from Perth with an express parcels train on 30th June 1961. (Cliff Woodhead/Colour-Rail.com 382274)

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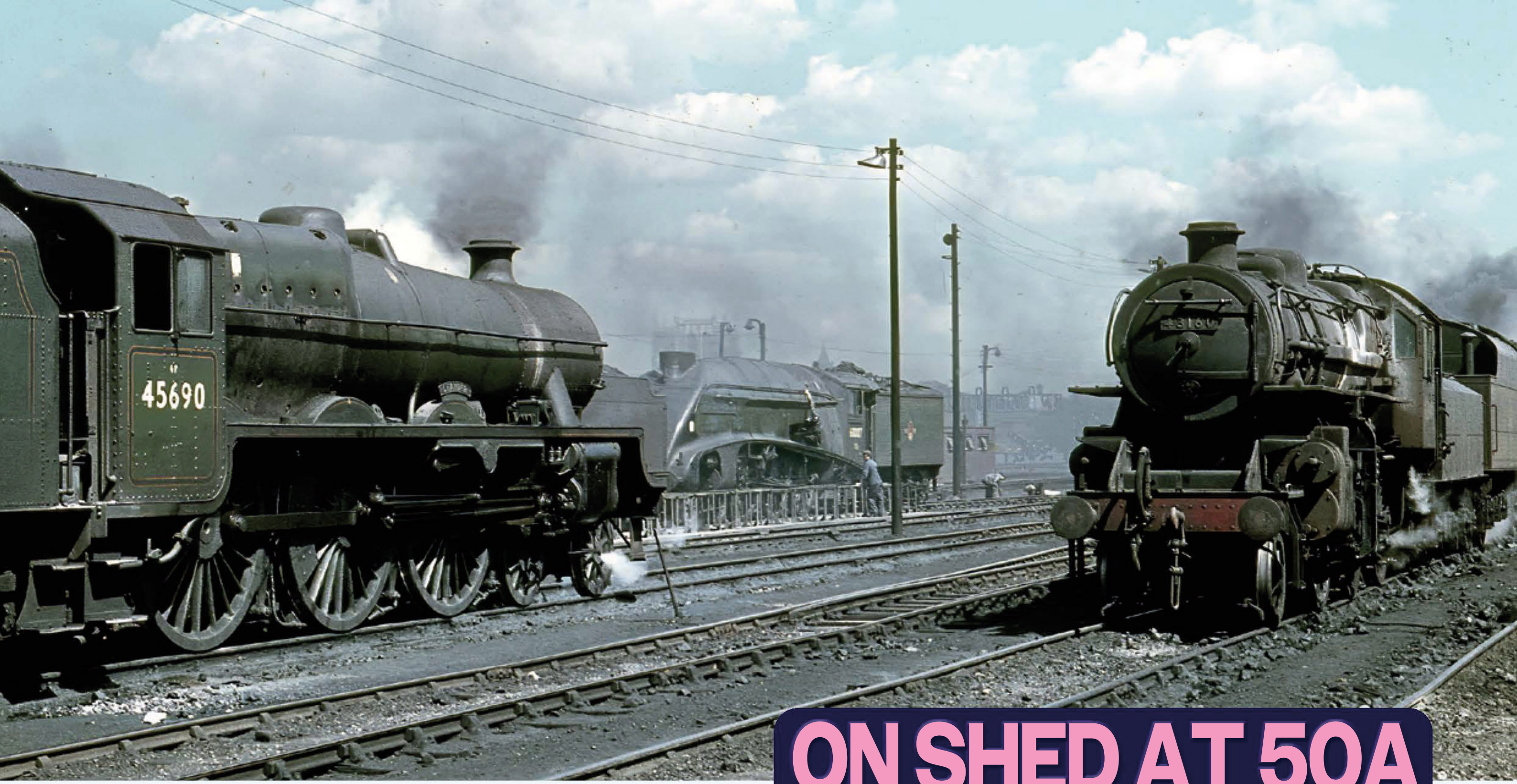
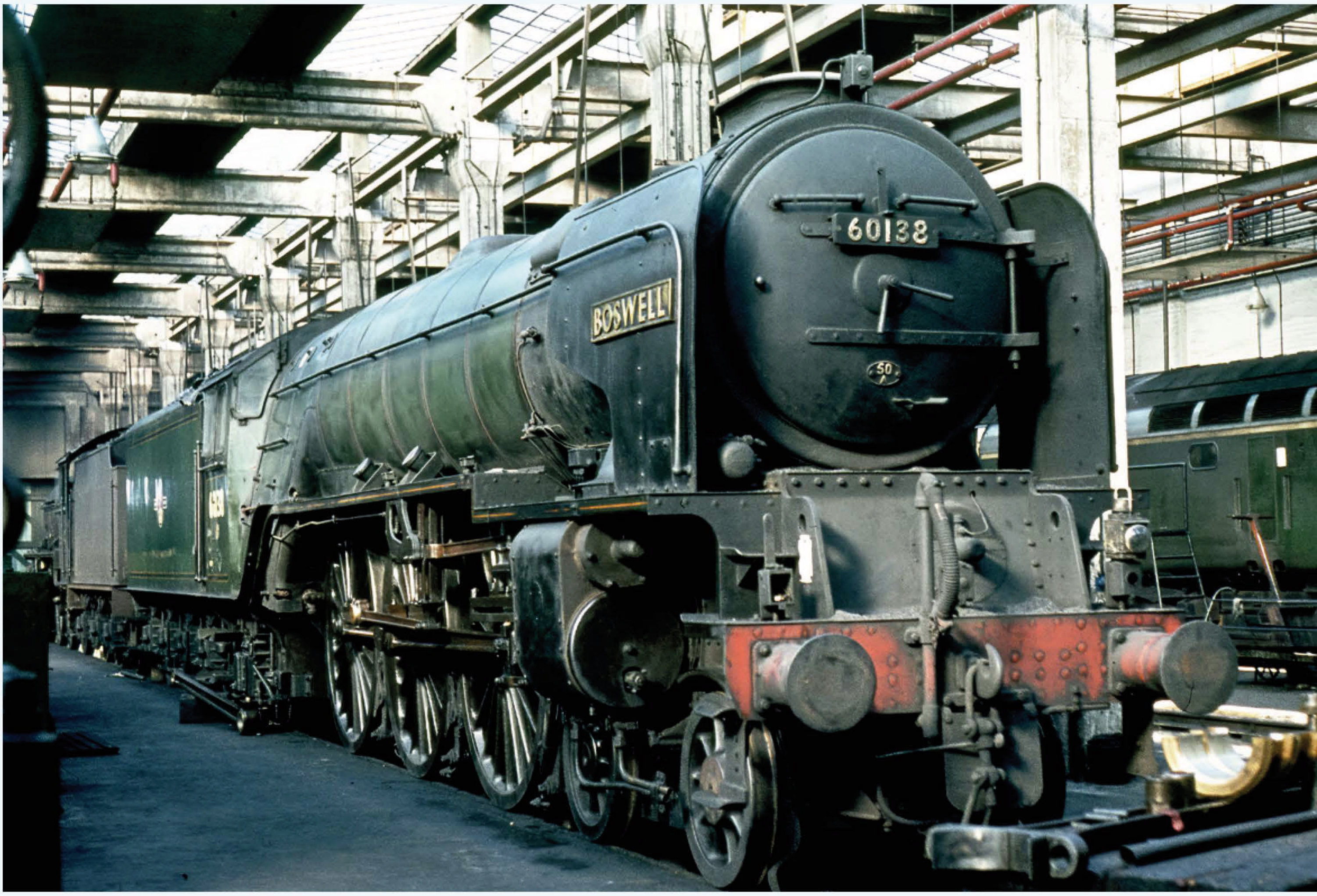


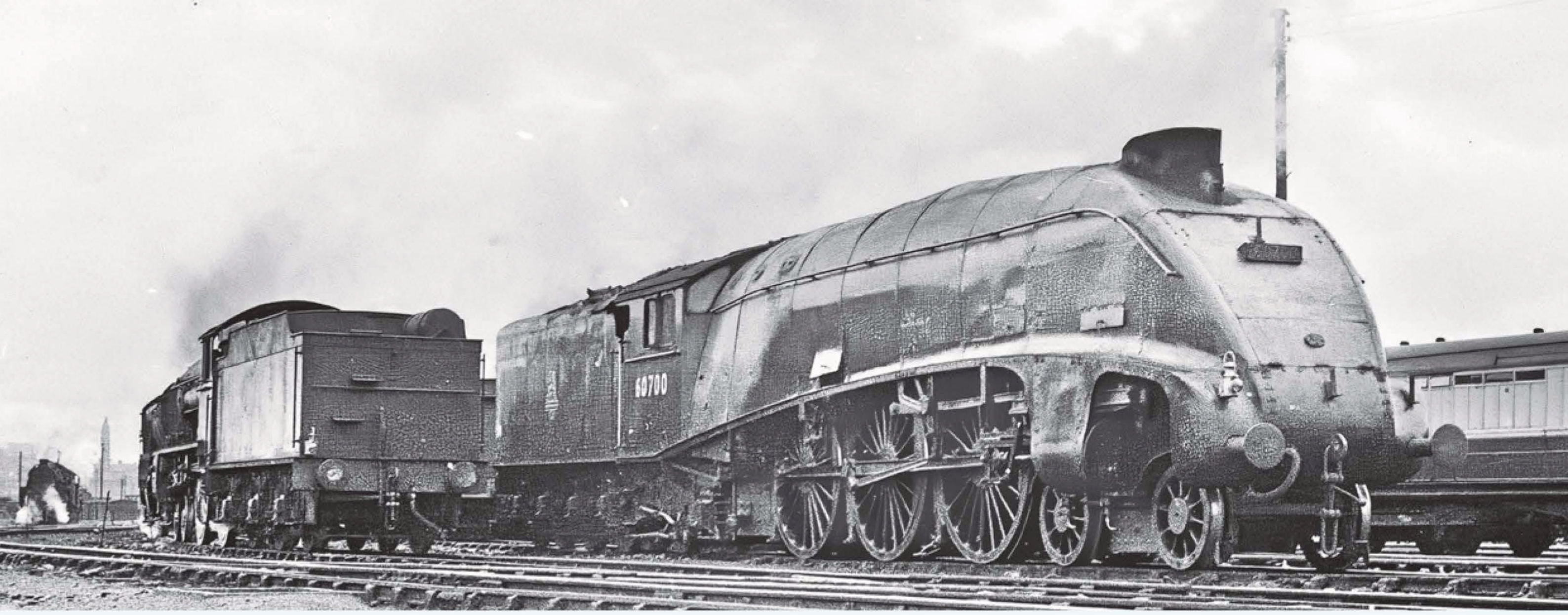
ON SHED AT 50A

A variety of motive power at York locomotive depot photographed by **GAVIN MORRISON**

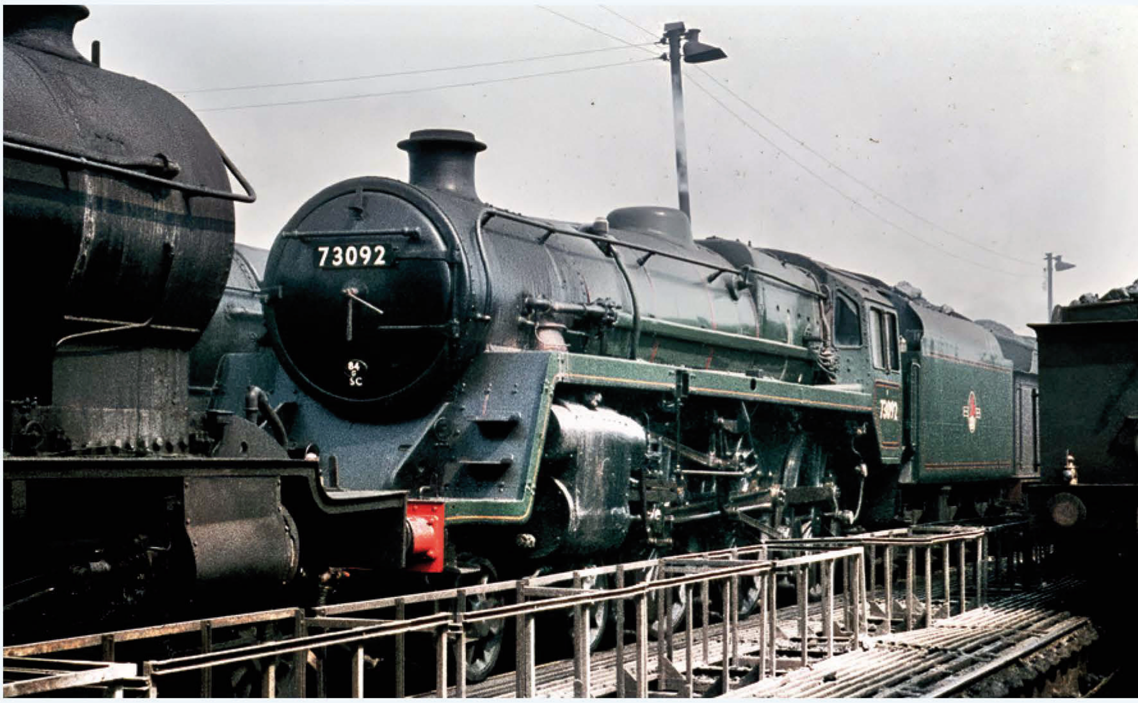
ABOVE: **With York being a focal point on the East Coast Main Line and the cross-country routes from the West of England, the Midlands and the North West, quite a wide variety of locomotives could be seen at the shed. The LMS 'Jubilees' based at Bristol Barrow Road could be harder to find by enthusiasts further north but on 16th June 1962 No.45690 *Leander* had worked through to York. It was sharing the yard with LNER A4 Pacific No.60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* from King's Cross, which is being oiled through one of the access doors in the streamlined casing, and LMS Ivatt Class 4 2-6-0 No.43160 which had come from Colwick on a more mundane duty.**

BELOW: **In 1957/8 two of York shed's roundhouses were replaced by a new straight shed and repair shop, with the coming diesel age in mind. Steam locomotives could still be found in that when receiving attention. On 12th October 1963 LNER A1 4-6-2 No.60138 *Boswell,* a 50A engine throughout its career, was there with one of its rods out. Behind is a B1 and across the building is an incomer in the shape of an English Electric Type 4.**



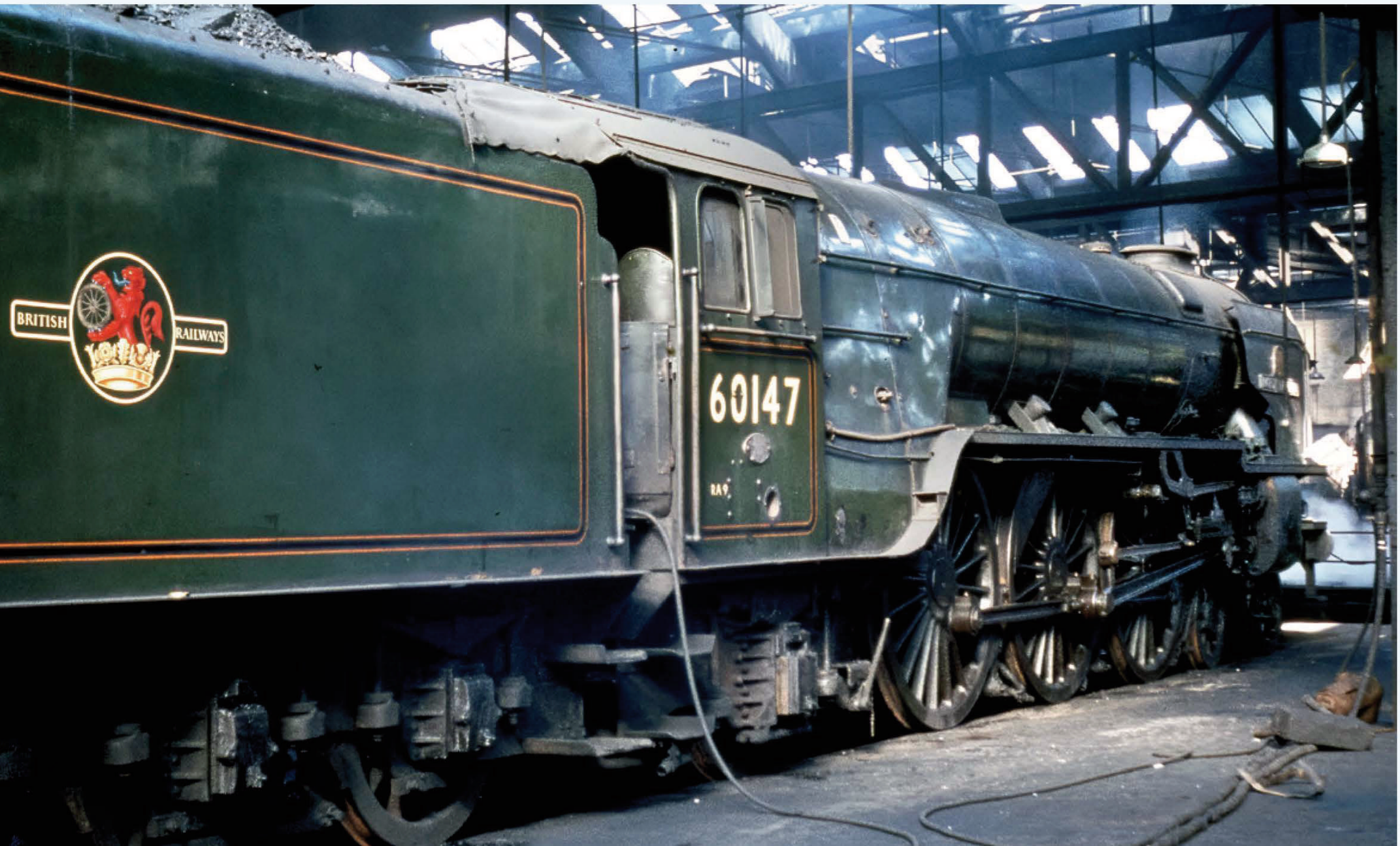


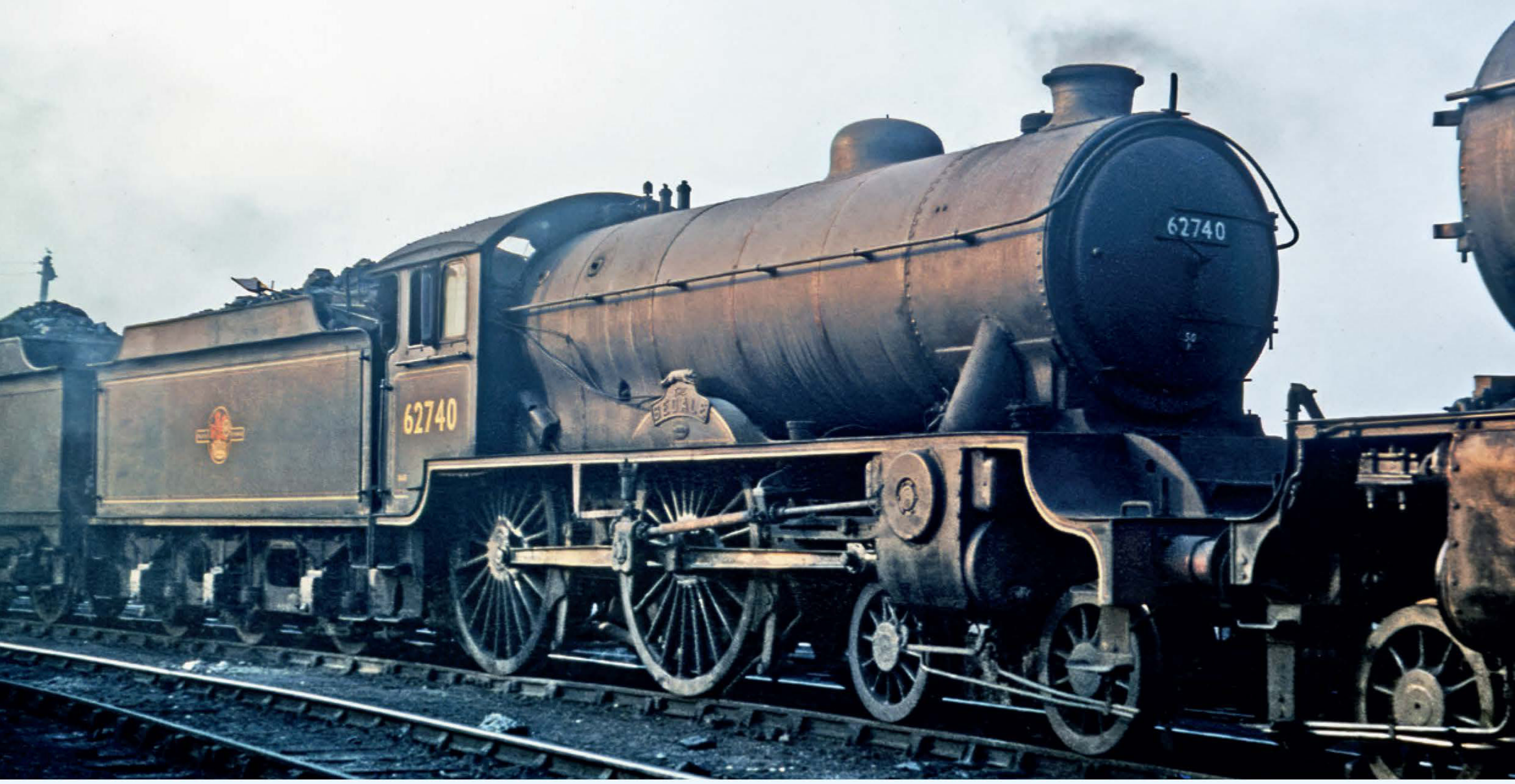
ABOVE: **An unexpected find on 4th May 1957 was the solitary LNER W1 4-6-4 No.60700, the resulting 1937 rebuild of the 'Hush-Hush' water tube locomotive No.10000. It didn't often appear north of Doncaster.**

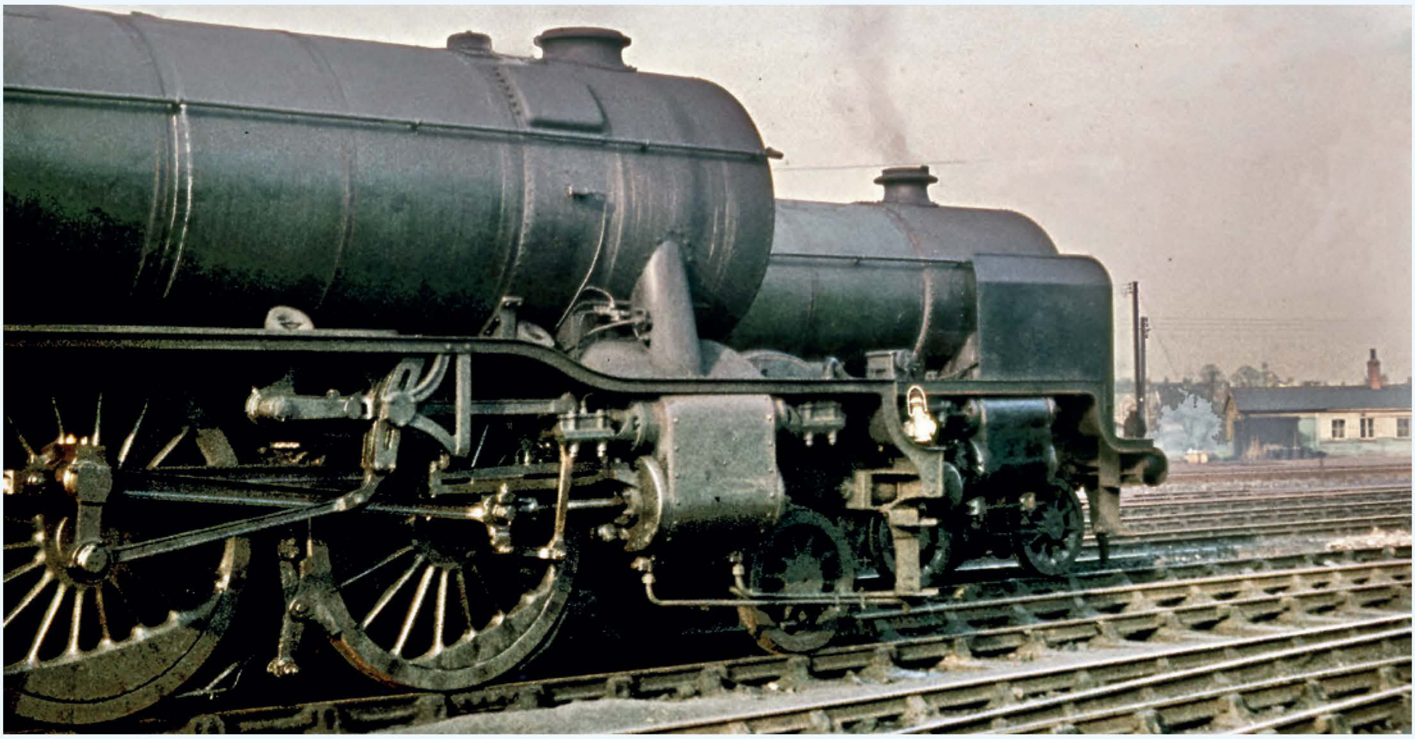


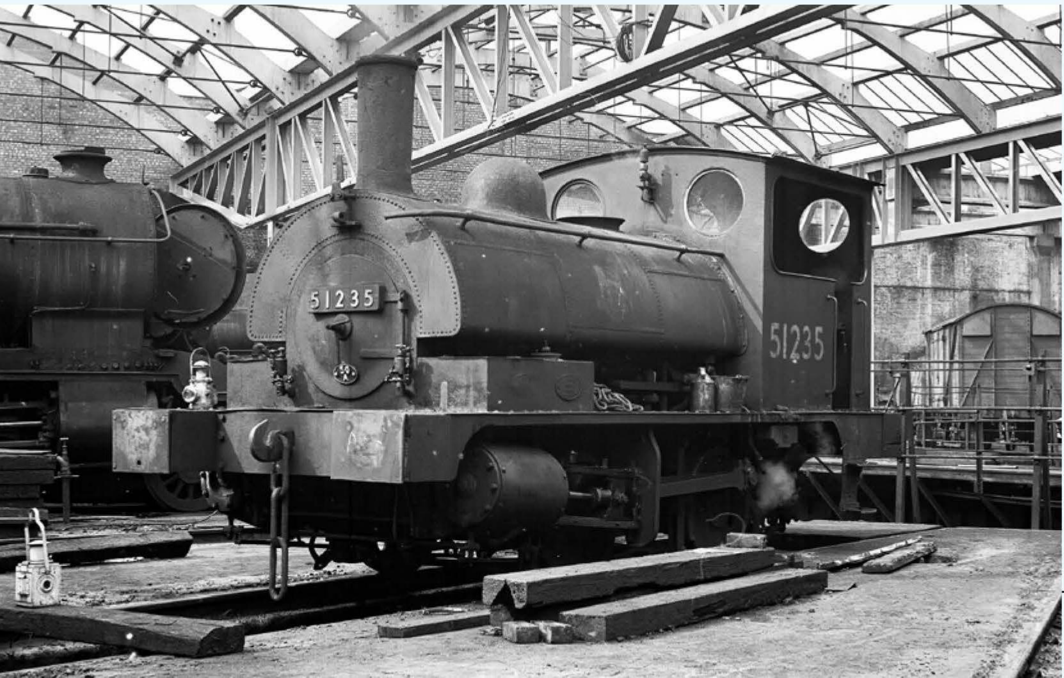
RIGHT: **Just out of Doncaster Works is BR Standard Class 5 4-6-0 No.73092 painted in lined green for the Western Region. On 5th June 1960 it is on the ash pits while working its way home to Shrewsbury.**

BELOW: **Inside the roundhouse (now the Great Hall of the National Railway Museum) on 12th October 1963 is A1 No.60147 *North Eastern*. It had recently been transferred to York, appropriately as the city had been the headquarters of the old North Eastern Railway.**





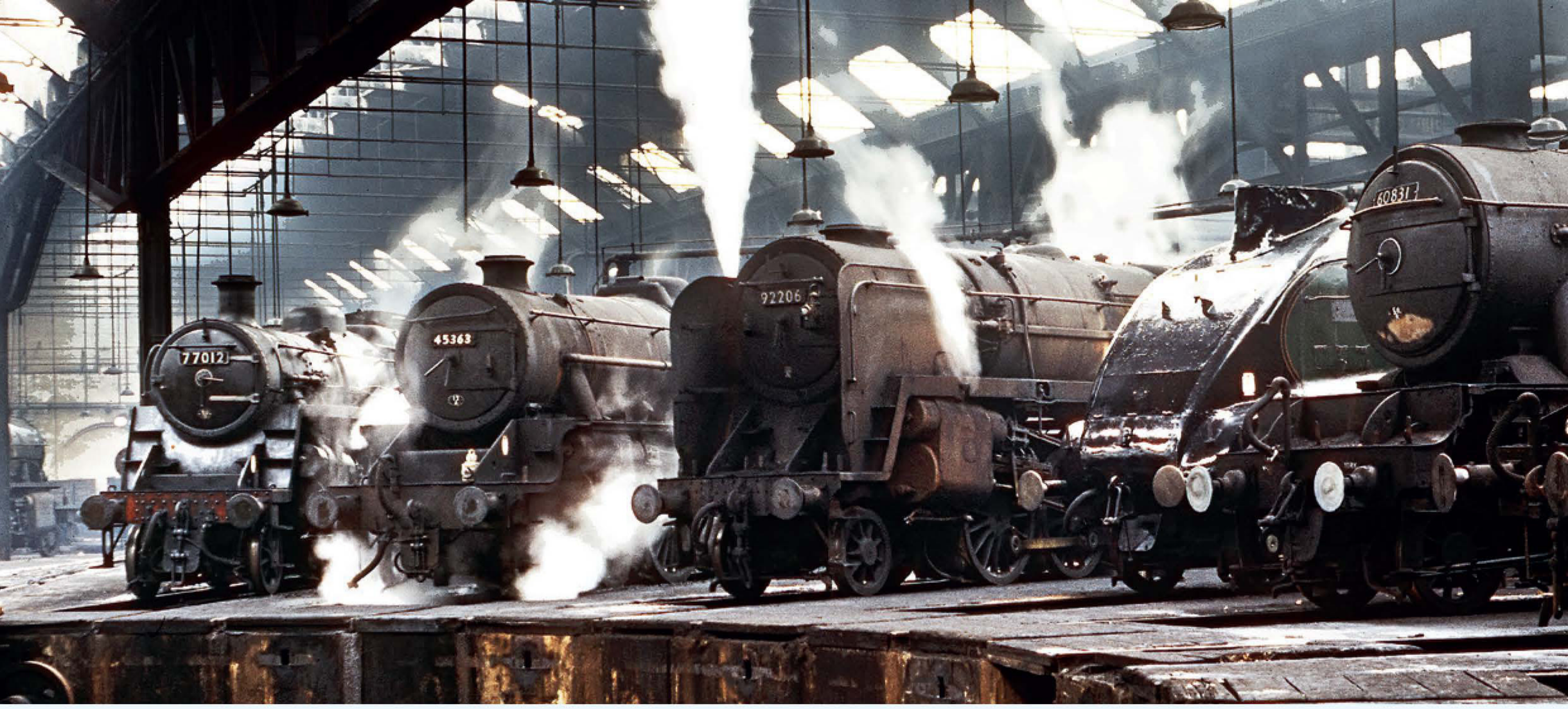




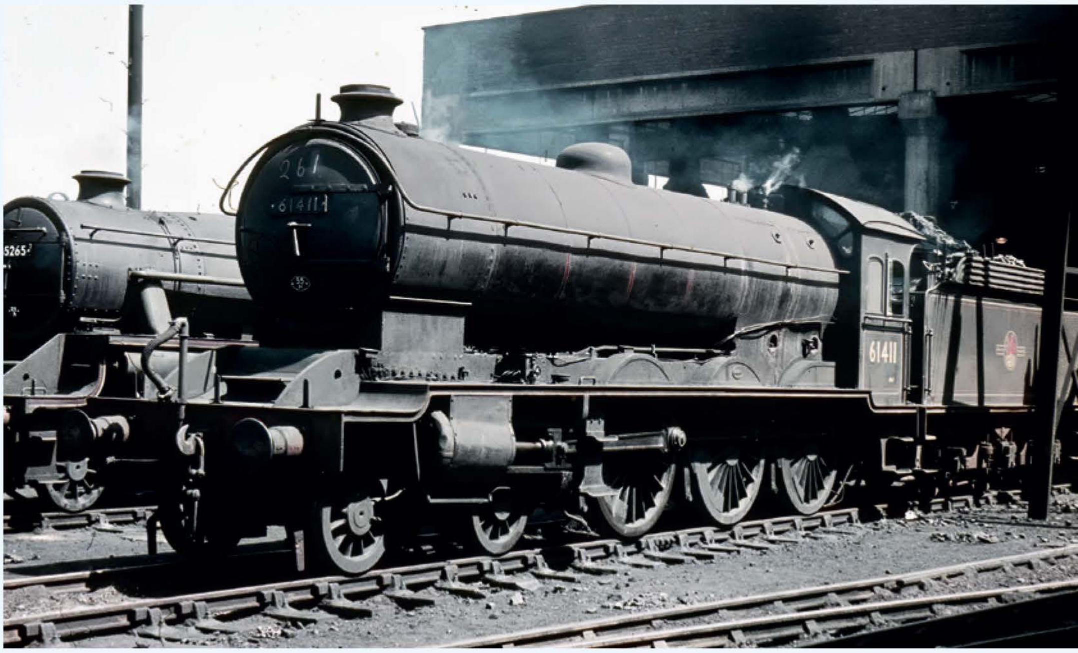
TOP: **The LNER 'Hunt' 4-4-0s were familiar at York on secondary and local passenger services. D49/2 No.62740 *The Bedale* has the low sun on it on 1st March 1959 when it was a 50A engine.**

ABOVE: **Unlikely companions, as could be found at York shed, on 6th March 1960: LNER V2 2-6-2 No.60806 finds itself next to LMS unrebuilt 'Patriot' 4-6-0 No.45517 which had worked in from Liverpool Exchange with the 10.30 train to Newcastle.**

LEFT: **Taking up just a small space in the roundhouse on 14th June 1958 is Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway 'Pug' 0-4-0ST No.51235, serving as shed pilot; It had replaced an older NER Y8 0-4-0T.**

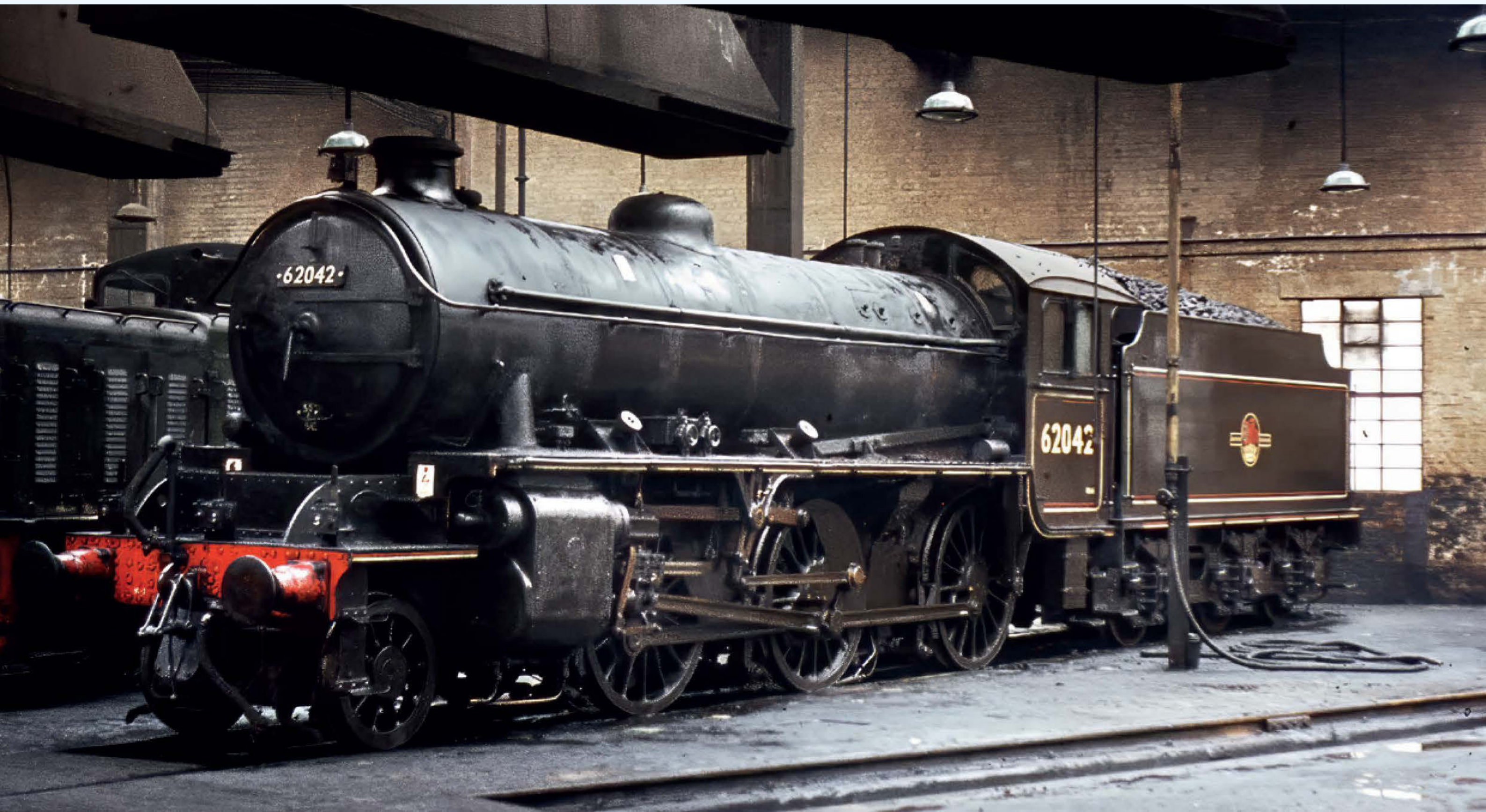


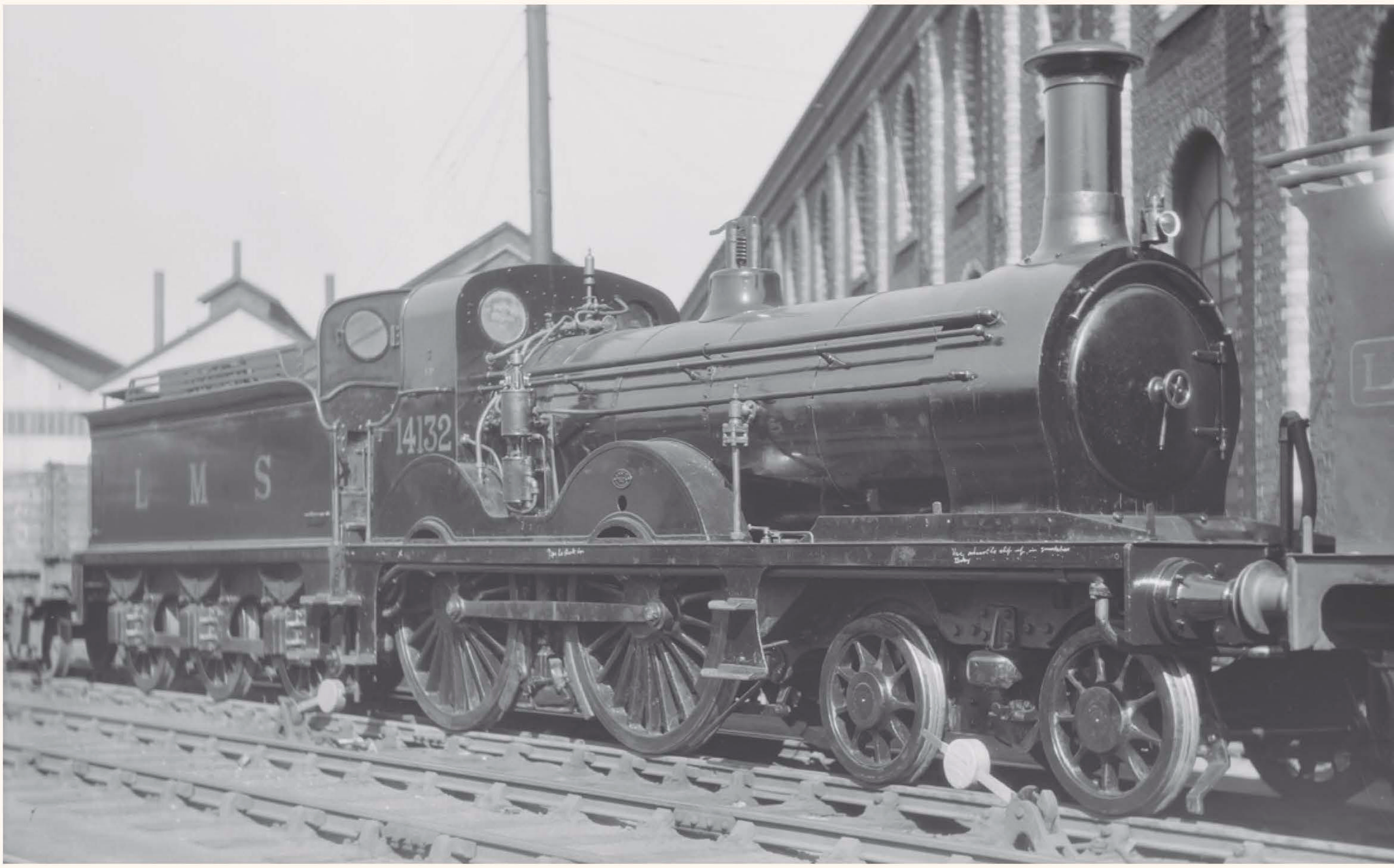
ABOVE: **Around the turntable on 22nd October 1966: BR Class 3 2-6-0 No.77012, LMS Class 5 4-6-0 No.45363, 9F 2-10-0 No.92206, A4 Pacific No.60019 *Bittern* and V2 No.60831 (the last of these to be withdrawn). *Bittern* had recently been bought privately for preservation and was lodging at York.**



RIGHT: **A gallant survivor from NER days was B16 4-6-0 No.61411, visiting the 'new' shed from Leeds Neville Hill on 26th June 1960. LMS 'Black Five' No.45265 is in from Saltley shed in Birmingham.**

BELOW: **The home shed's LNER K1 2-6-0 No.62042 looks cared for in the roundhouse on 2nd May 1964. A 204hp diesel shunter is behind. There would be quite some cleaning-up to do before the building emerged as the NRM a decade later!**





Sitting outside Kilmarnock Works is a Hugh Smellie '119' Class 4-4-0 (a 'Wee Bogie') resplendent in its LMS livery and number of 14132. From its immaculate condition, it is believed that this image was captured in 1928 on the locomotive being newly outshopped. It started life in January 1884 as No.138 having been built at Kilmarnock Works. It was placed on the duplicate A list in February 1915 and under the G&SWR renumbering scheme it became No.715. The locomotive emerged from Kilmarnock Works in January 1921 after having been rebuilt by Whitelegg. Withdrawal came on 18th September 1931.
(Ian Middleditch Collection)

KILMARNOCK'S RA

BY DOUGLAS McNAUGHT

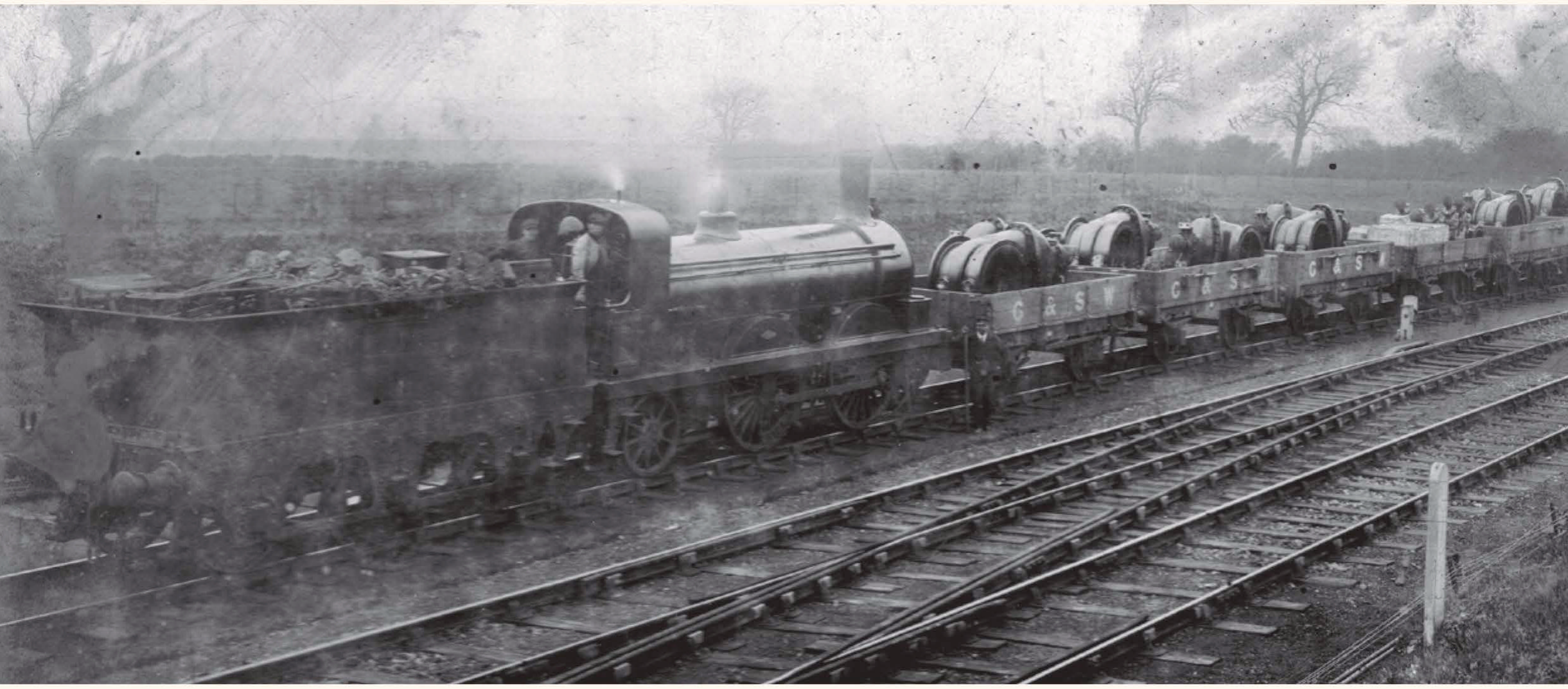
The Ayrshire coalfield was the second largest in Scotland and Kilmarnock, with fifteen collieries in the locality, was very much in the thick of it. Inevitably, this gave much local work to Hurlford shed, but in addition there was considerable work undertaken servicing the South Ayrshire coalfield around Auchinleck and New Cumnock and its extension into North Dumfriesshire where there were collieries at Kirkconnel and Sanquhar.

Locomotives involved in the coal trade tended not to have straightforward journeys from colliery to harbour or other destination; considerable shunting at colliery level was required of them. In the Kilmarnock area, most of the coal wagons went in the first instance to Barleith Mineral Sidings, situated alongside Hurlford shed and The Blocks, whose ten lengthy sidings had a wagon capacity of around 600 four-wheeled wagons and which were always pretty well filled, before being moved on to their destination after any necessary sorting. Other heavy industries in the Kilmarnock area, such as forges, iron foundries and at least six fireclay works, assisted in keeping Barleith Mineral Sidings and other goods yards - two in the vicinity of the station and those at Woodhill, St. Marnock's and Bellfield - well occupied. Sixteen private sidings in the Kilmarnock area belonging to fourteen different industrial companies or organisations generated much traffic with supplies to and the finished product from these establishments (see Table Two below).

Goods and mineral trains regularly passed through Kilmarnock station, this being a necessary route for trains to and from Barleith Mineral Sidings and the south and places such as Ardrossan Harbour, Paisley and Glasgow, but the two centre roads kept the platform faces clear for passenger trains. The opening of the Riccarton loop line meant that henceforth traffic to and from Barleith Mineral Sidings and the south and such places as Ayr and Troon could avoid passage through the station.

Several duty rosters for Hurlford locomotives covered the coal traffic in the New Cumnock area. Two of these rosters could include up to seven return journeys daily between Bank Junction (north of New Cumnock station) or Bank Colliery Exchange Sidings and Knockshinnoch Colliery, to assist locomotives belonging to the colliery company

Table 2 – LIST OF COMPANIES WITH PRIVATE SIDINGS IN KILMARNOCK AREA
*Andrew Barclay, Sons and Company Limited, Caledonia Works, Kilmarnock
Barr Thomson Ltd, Netherton Iron Works, Little Bellsland Road (later known as Queens Drive), Kilmarnock
Brownlie & Co. Saw Mills, Kilmarnock
*Busbie Coal Co. Ltd, Busbie Colliery, Crosshouse, near Kilmarnock
*Archibald Finnie & Son, Finnies Pit, Fardalehill, near Crosshouse, near Kilmarnock
*Glenfield & Kennedy Ltd, Hydraulic Engineers, Glenfield Works, Low Glencairn Street, Kilmarnock
*Kilmamock Corporation Electricity Department, Kilmarnock Power Station
*Kilmamock Corporation Gas Department, Riverbank Gas Works, Kilmarnock
Kilmarnock Engineering Co. Ltd, Britannia Works, Kilmarnock
*Kilmamock Iron Co. (site location not known)
Portland Forge Ltd, Forge Street, Kilmarnock
Scottish Cooperative Wholesale Society, Kilmarnock
*Shanks & Co. Ltd, Longpark Pottery, Hillhead, Kilmarnock
*Southhook & Shawsrigg Fireclay Co., Southhook Colliery & Fireclay Works, Crosshouse, near Kilmarnock
*Southhook & Shawsrigg Fireclay Co., Bonnyton Colliery & Fireclay Works, Kilmarnock
Owning company not known, Kirkstyle Pit, Kilmarnock
*Company known to operate their own shunting locomotive(s); other companies may have been served by G&SWR shunters



Quality may be lacking but there is interest in this photograph of an unidentified '221' Class 0-4-2 at an unknown location somewhere in the Kilmarnock area. The open wagons contain valves manufactured by the renowned engineering company of Glanfield & Kennedy, one of the firms in the Kilmarnock area which had sidings connected to the G&SWR system. The '221' Class, designed by James Stirling, was the second most numerous class on the G&SWR. Delivered between 1874 and 1878, 50 were built by Neilson in five batches and ten by Dübs & Co. Manson rebuilt 30 locomotives at Kilmarnock Works between 1901 and 1904 and the non-rebuilds were placed on the duplicate A list from 1904 onwards. They performed excellently on goods work and were able to handle passenger trains successfully. By the end of the 1880s the class had accumulated around Glasgow and Hurlford, working on short-distance goods and mineral trains. (Ian Middleditch Collection)

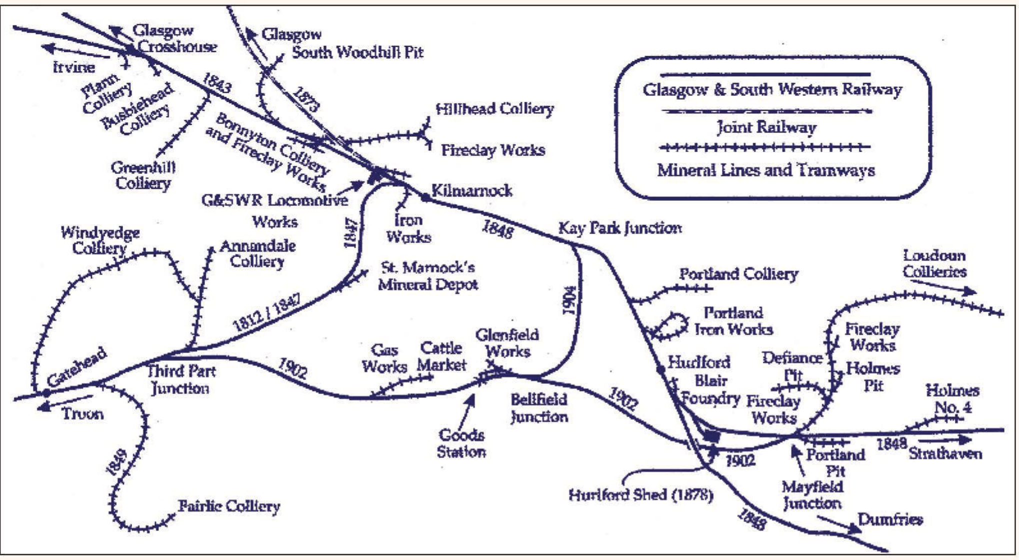
ILWAYS TO 1922 PART TWO

in their shunting and transfer duties.

Hurlford locomotives also worked mineral empties to and loaded trains from Fauldhead Colliery at Kirkconnel and Gateside Colliery at Sanquhar, the volume from Fauldhead being approximately twice that of Gateside. One of the turns to Kirkconnel included whole day shunting there after arriving light in the morning and before departing for Barleith Mineral Sidings in the late afternoon with a coal train.

Excellent steaming coal was produced at Knockshinnoch, Fauldhead and Gateside collieries. A series of Coal Testing trials - 195 test runs - conducted by the LMS Northern Division between 1929 and 1931 graded the product of these three collieries as suitable for passenger work, Fauldhead for local passenger trains and Knockshinnoch and Gateside for express passenger duties, Gateside being rated the best of the fourteen collieries in South West Scotland that participated in the tests.

Ayrshire being also an agricultural county, there was a goodly number of livestock duties and that included imported animals. As well as main line work to the north and the south, and westwards to the harbours on the Firth of Clyde, there were duties eastwards on the branch line 'up the Valley' to Darvel and indeed one of these invaded Caledonian Railway territory, reaching Strathaven. Servicing collieries was again a major part of this Irvine Valley work and three rosters involved a train of livestock, including the one to Strathaven. When it is considered that all these livestock trains were running six days per week, there must have been a colossal number of animals transported.

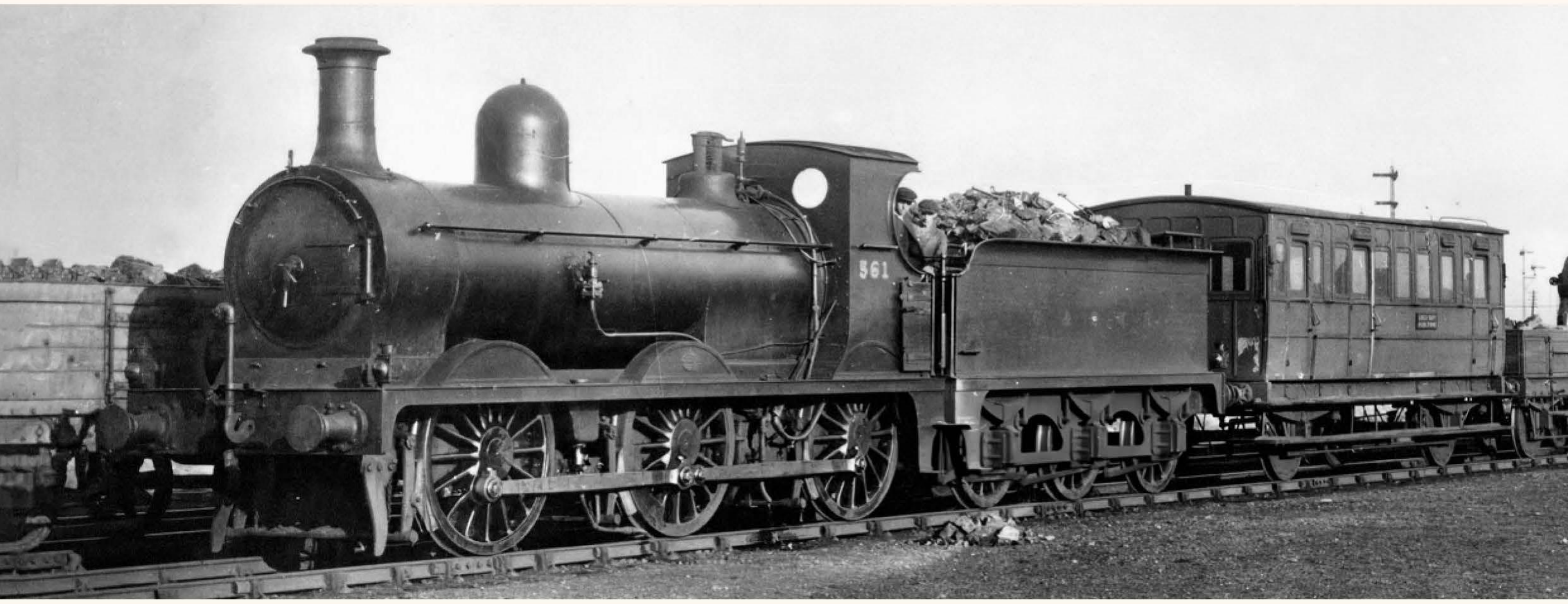

Glasgow
Crosshouse
Irvine
Glasgow
South Woodhill Pit
1843
1873
Plann Colliery
Busbiehead Colliery
Bonnyton Colliery and Fireclay Works
Hillhead Colliery
Fireclay Works
Greenhill Colliery
G&SWR Locomotive Works
Kilmarnock
Iron Works
1847
1848
Kay Park Junction
Windyedge Colliery
Annandale Colliery
St. Marnock's Mineral Depot
1812 / 1847
1904
Portland Colliery
Loudoun Collieries
Portland Iron Works
Fireclay Works
Gatehead
Third Part Junction
1902
Gas Works
Cattle Market
Glenfield Works
Hurlford
Blair Foundry
Defiance Pit
Holmes Pit
Holmes No. 4
Troon
Bellfield Junction
1902
Fireclay Works
Goods Station
1902
Portland Pit
1848
Strathaven
1849
Hurlford Shed (1878)
Mayfield Junction
1848
Dumfries
Fairlie Colliery
Glasgow & South Western Railway
Joint Railway
Mineral Lines and Tramways

The Ayrshire harbours at Girvan, Ayr, Troon, Irvine and Ardrossan needed pilot locomotives, and G&SWR sheds at Girvan, Ayr, Troon Harbour and Ardrossan were on hand to serve their particular harbours. Hurlford shed, twelve miles distant, provided a weekday pilot locomotive at Irvine harbour whose eight hour stint augmented the 13½ hour shift of the main harbour pilot supplied from Troon Harbour shed, a sub-shed of Hurlford. The Hurlford locomotive on this turn certainly paid its way, for in addition to pilot duties at Irvine harbour, it not only had to haul a train in both directions but it also had on each journey to perform shunting work enroute! Hurlford also provided a pilot each weekday for Irvine station, this turn involving shunting duties en route on the return journey.

As well as the various aforementioned shunting duties, there were seven duty rosters which involved full-time shunting – four at the Kilmarnock yards, two at Barleith Mineral Sidings and one at Auchinleck.

Each summer, Hurlford shed lost two locomotives and crew for a fortnight when they were sent to the Maidens & Dunure Light Railway to assist with the potato picking - Ayrshire potatoes being a particular delicacy to delight the palate.

To control all this bustling activity, there were 27 signal cabins operational in the Kilmarnock area and these are detailed in Table Three. Information exists from a 1908



The Hurlford shed breakdown train is headed by James Manson-designed 0-6-0 No.361. This was the first of its class so gave its number to the class, which comprised 34 locomotives. The first twenty were built by Neilson, Reid in 1900, twelve were built by the North British Locomotive Co. in 1907 and two at Kilmarnock Works in 1910. As many as 21 were later rebuilt by Whitelegg and not to their betterment, for as built they were successful locomotives. Under the G&SWR renumbering scheme of 1919 No.361 became No.115 was renumbered 17474 by the LMS which withdrew it from service in 1932. (Ian Middleditch Collection)

survey that in a 24-hour period, there were 435 movements past Kilmarnock No.1 signal cabin and 390 past Kilmarnock No.2.

A study of the G&SWR water supply situation produced a surprising - and fascinating - revelation. The water tank at Hurlford shed which supplied two columns held the largest capacity of the 89 water tanks on the G&SWR system. The capacity was about twice that of the tank at Glasgow's Corkerhill shed which also supplied two columns and indeed held 31,437 gallons more than the aggregate capacity of the eight water tanks in the Glasgow area which supplied a total of seventeen columns. The other Glasgow area water tanks were at St. Enoch (six columns at the station and three at the engine shed), Cook Street (two columns), College, St. John's, South Side and Bellahouston. The Kilmarnock area water supply situation is summarised in Table Four.

Table 3 – LIST OF SIGNAL CABINS IN KILMARNOCK AREA

Name of Cabin	Opened	Closed
Barleith	12/8/1915	31/3/1940
Bellfield Junction	06/06/1904	10/08/1938
Bonnyton	1887	7/11/1926
Busbie Colliery	1889	?
Busbiehead	20/11/1915	28/11/1948
Crosshouse Junction 1st	1873	?
2nd	?	18/12/1965
Crosshouse North	1878	4/7/1965
Fardalehill	25/2/1914	13/8/1935
Gatehead	1884	29/6/1986
Grange	?	10/2/1974
Holmes No.4 Pit	1887	?/7/1938
Hurlford Mineral Sidings	?	24/1/1966
Hurlford North	1876	8/7/1934
Hurlford South	1876	?
Kay Park Junction	6/6/1904	10/4/1976
Kilmarnock	12/4/1876	?
Kilmarnock Goods Junction	6/6/1873	7/11/1926
Kilmarnock No.1	1890	12/4/1976
Kilmarnock No.2	1890	12/4/1976
Kilmarnock No.3	1889	27/3/1966
Kilmarnock No.4	1889	27/3/1966
Kilmarnock South	1873	12/4/1976
Riccarton	1907	30/6/1938
Southhook	?	19/12/1965
St. Marnock	1893	10/2/1974
Thirdpart Junction	1900	27/6/1938
Woodhill	1877	14/11/1965

Table 4 – LIST OF WATER COLUMNS IN THE KILMARNOCK AREA

Location	No of Columns	Position of Columns	Capacity of Tanks (Gallons)
Hurlford	4	One each on Up and Down platforms	31,807
		One in Turntable Road and one in Coaling Shed	140,175
Kilmarnock	5	One each at North end of Nos. 2 and 3 Platforms; one at South end of Nos. 4 and 5 Platforms; and one in Turntable Road	32,306
		One in Goods Yard Loading Bank Siding	3,280

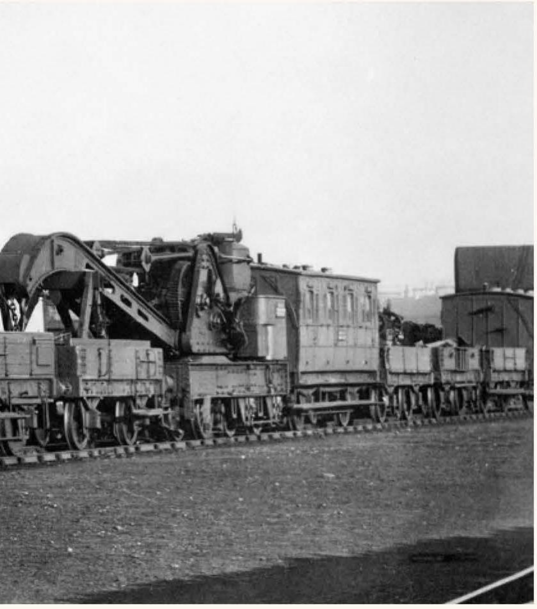
Kilmarnock station was never quiet, not even during the night, for if there were no passenger trains there was the work involved in servicing mail and newspaper trains plus the passage through the station of numerous goods and mineral trains, while shunting operations were continuous.

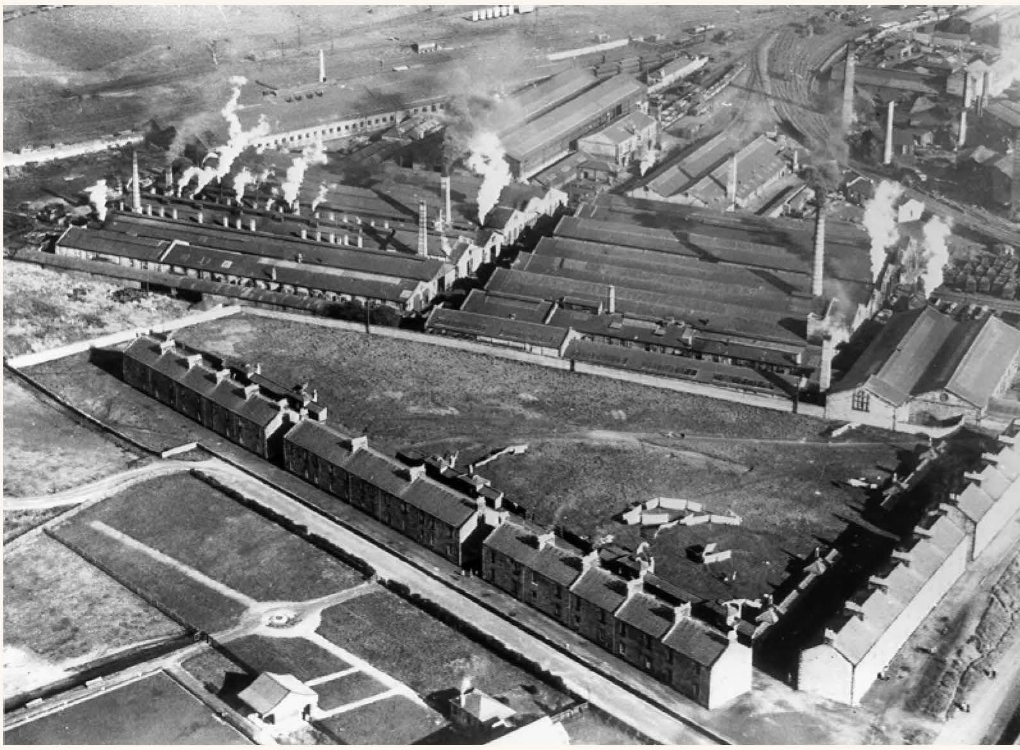
So the night was enlivened by the chuffing of shunting engines, the clicking of changing points, the occasional creaking of turntables, the clashing of buffers, the clanging of couplings and the clanking of those aforementioned trains through the centre roads, with some whistling for the road and even the opening of cylinder drain cocks being thrown in for good measure. The sounds that made up a railway operation were ever present at Kilmarnock in 1922, for it was a case of "We Never Stop!"

The nearby residents would be well accustomed to this railway music, so their sleep would scarcely be troubled. But what of the guests at the adjacent Station Hotel? Would they, unaccustomed as most of them would be to such a medley of melodies, enjoy an undisturbed sleep?

Kilmarnock is more than worthy of its place in railway history and was well deserving of its sobriquet 'The Railway Town'. However, Kilmarnock station today is but a pale shadow of what went before; sadly the legacy left by the current situation will add nothing of consequence to local railway heritage.

Oh to have the powers of a Time Lord!





An undated but early aerial view of Bonnyton Square houses and beyond them Kilmarnock Works, which was opened by the G&SWR in 1856. The main works of the company built, repaired and scrapped engines, coaches and goods wagons and at its peak employed around 1,200 people. While giving the appearance of being fairly extensive, by the beginning of the twentieth century work volumes were way beyond the level that could be coped with, so in 1901 another Ayrshire establishment was opened, Barassie Works, which dealt with coaches and wagons. Kilmarnock Works closed in the late 1960s. The G&SWR built 132 houses at Bonnyton Square for staff at the works and station; more were built subsequent to this image being captured. (Frank Beattie Collection)

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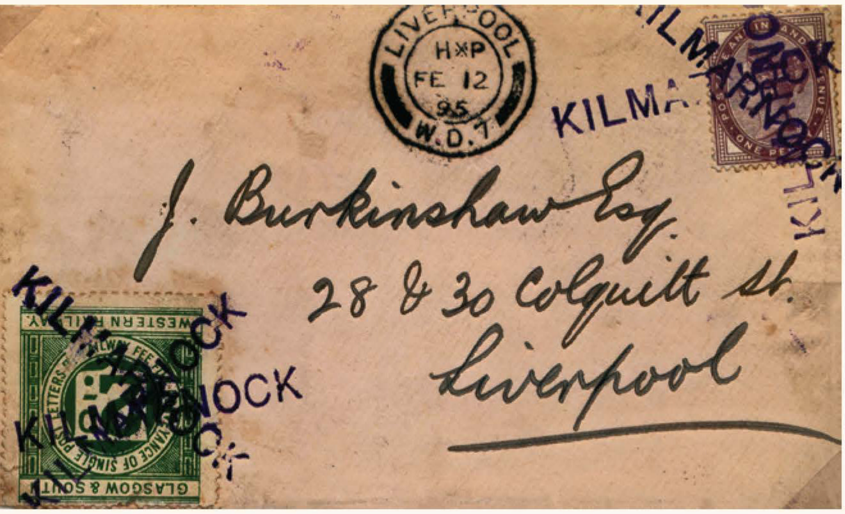
My thanks go to David Ross, Ian R. Bendall, Honorary Chairman of the Industrial Railway Society, Frank Beattie, Kilmarnock historian, Reverend James McNaughtan, Ian Middleditch, Honorary Chairman of the Glasgow & South Western Railway Association and Andrew Swan, Honorary Assistant Archivist of the Glasgow & South Western Railway Association. In particular, I am much indebted to Stuart Rankin, the stalwart Honorary Archivist of the Glasgow & South Western Railway Association, for his very valuable assistance.

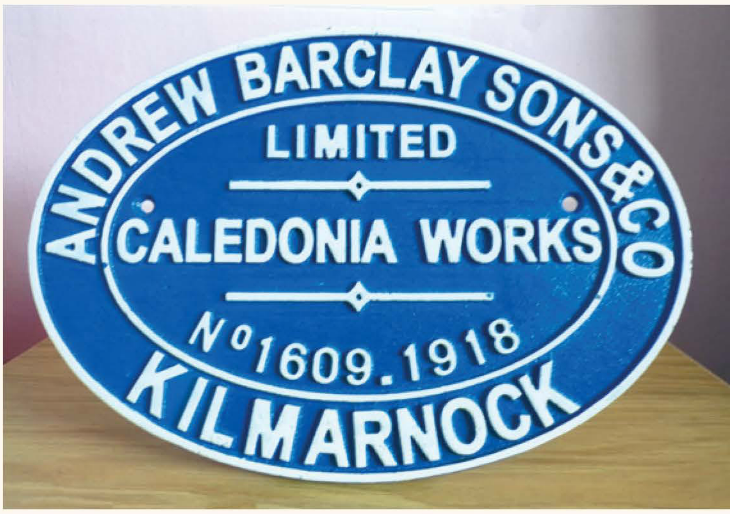
An interesting memento of bygone times, illustrating the relationship between the Post Office and the G&SWR. Where mail was posted at the Post Office, it would have been brought to the station with the Kilmarnock PO frank and with the postage stamp cancelled. The railway transhipment of such mail was paid for in bulk by the Post Office. However, mail could be brought to the station by the public and in that case the railway company recover its transport costs by charging a fee to the member of the public, duly affixing its G&SWR stamp which, along with the postage stamp, it cancelled by overstamping with the Kilmarnock stamp. On receipt at the delivery Post Office the mail would be franked with the delivery office's mark before being delivered. Nowadays it is much simpler – and very much costlier! (Frank Beattie Collection)

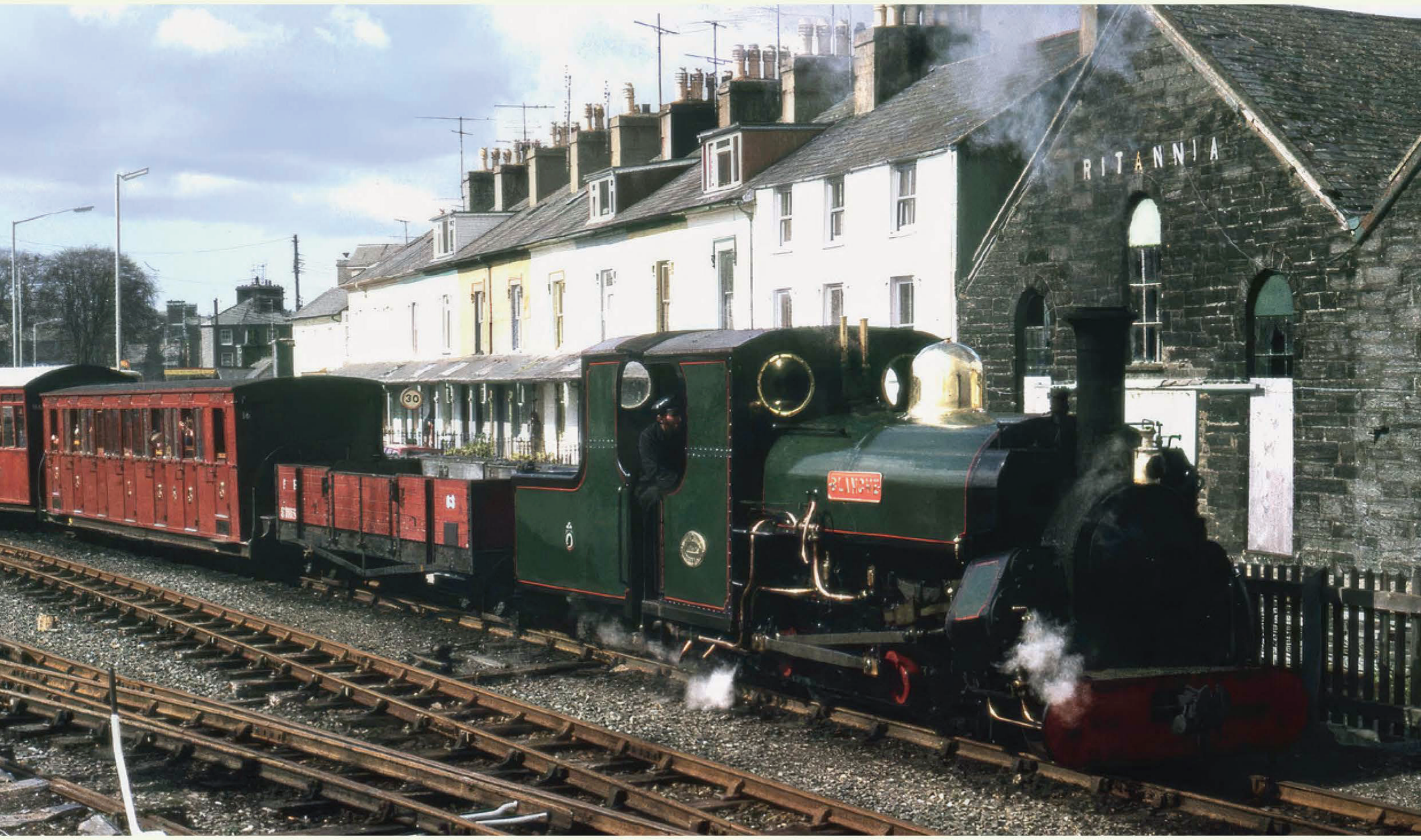


J. Burkinshaw Esq.
28 & 30 Colquitt St.
Liverpool

LIVERPOOL
H P
FE 12
95
W.D.7
KILMARNOCK
GLASGOW & SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
ONE PENNY

This replica works plate is a treasured possession of the author , being a surprise present from his grandson. The locomotive concerned was an 0-4-0ST with outside cylinders of 16in diameter x 24in stroke and 3ft 8in diameter wheels which was sold on 28th September 1918 to the Seaton Carew Iron Co.Ltd., West Hartlepool. (Author)





A photograph taken on a later visit to the Ffestiniog Railway on 9th April 1975, when the sun was shining, showing the ex-Penrhyn Railway *Blanche* departing from Porthmadog for Ddaullt. A permanent way wagon has been included in the formation. In the background is the old Britannia Foundry, the site now occupied by a Premier Inn! (Author)

A MIDSUMMER WEEK

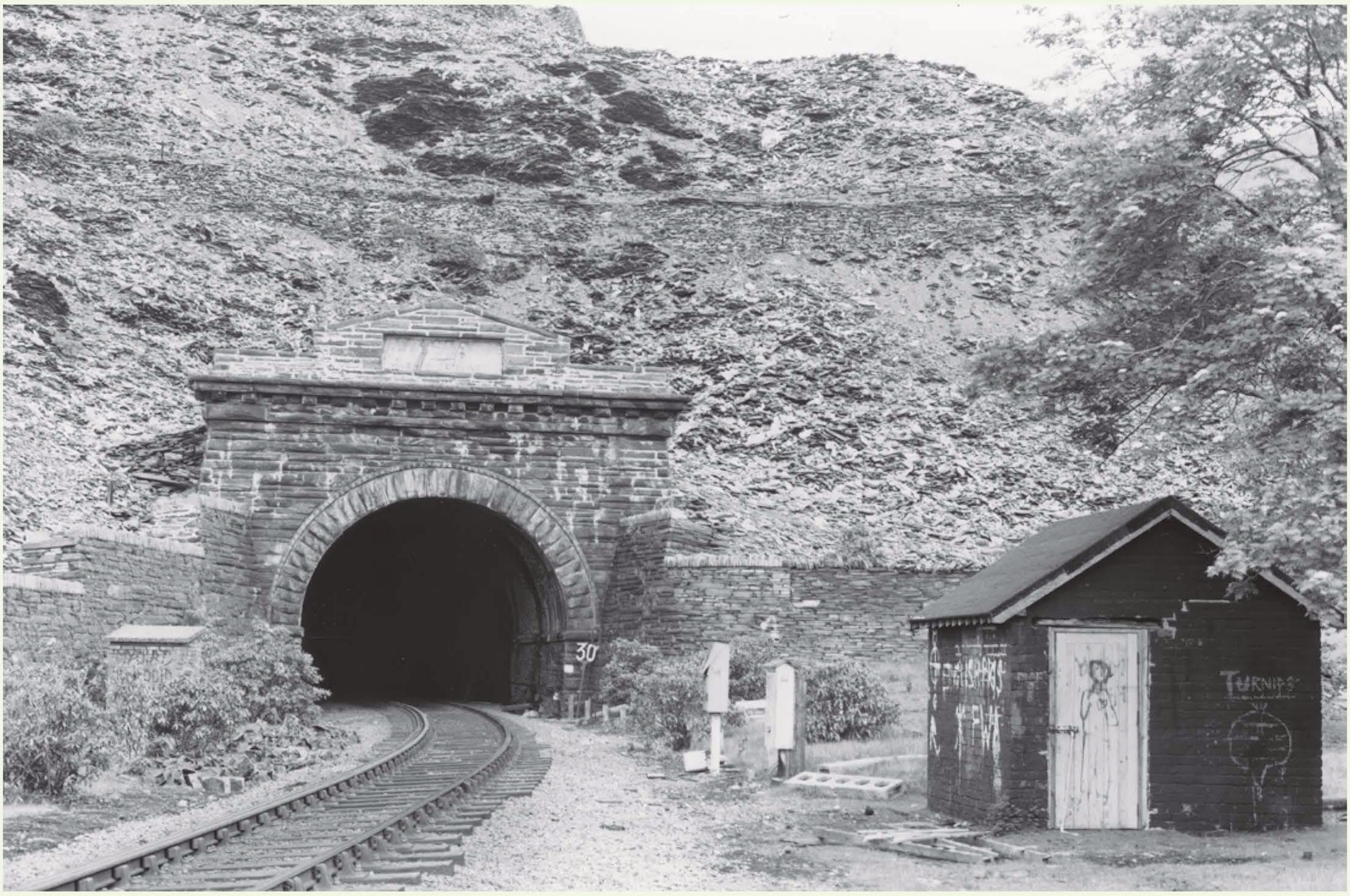
Remembered by **JOHN CHAPMAN**

The summer of 1968 was not a particularly good time to be a steam enthusiast in the United Kingdom. Southern Region steam had finished – in fine style – in July 1967 and steam traction was coming to an end in the North West of England, to finish completely in August of that year. Enthusiasts flocked to witness steam's last gasp but, for those of us who remembered the days in the 1950s and early 1960s when well-kept steam locomotives were the primary motive power throughout the British Railways network, to see unkempt, dirty locomotives eking out their days, primarily on freight and engineering trains plus a few special passenger trains, was pretty disheartening. So after a couple of visits to see steam in Lancashire when a colleague suggested a visit to the Festiniog Railway, where he worked as a volunteer and where steam reigned supreme – and they were actually in the process of extending the line – I jumped at the chance.

My colleague and I met at Euston on Friday June 21st where, after a hearty meal, we caught the 23.45 service to Crewe hauled by a shiny blue electric locomotive No.E3023. To arrive there in about two hours was still something of a novelty for me and we

Llandudno Junction station, looking west on 28th May 1987.
(Peter Heath/Oxfordshire Railway Society)

Cyffordd Llandudno
Llandudno Junction



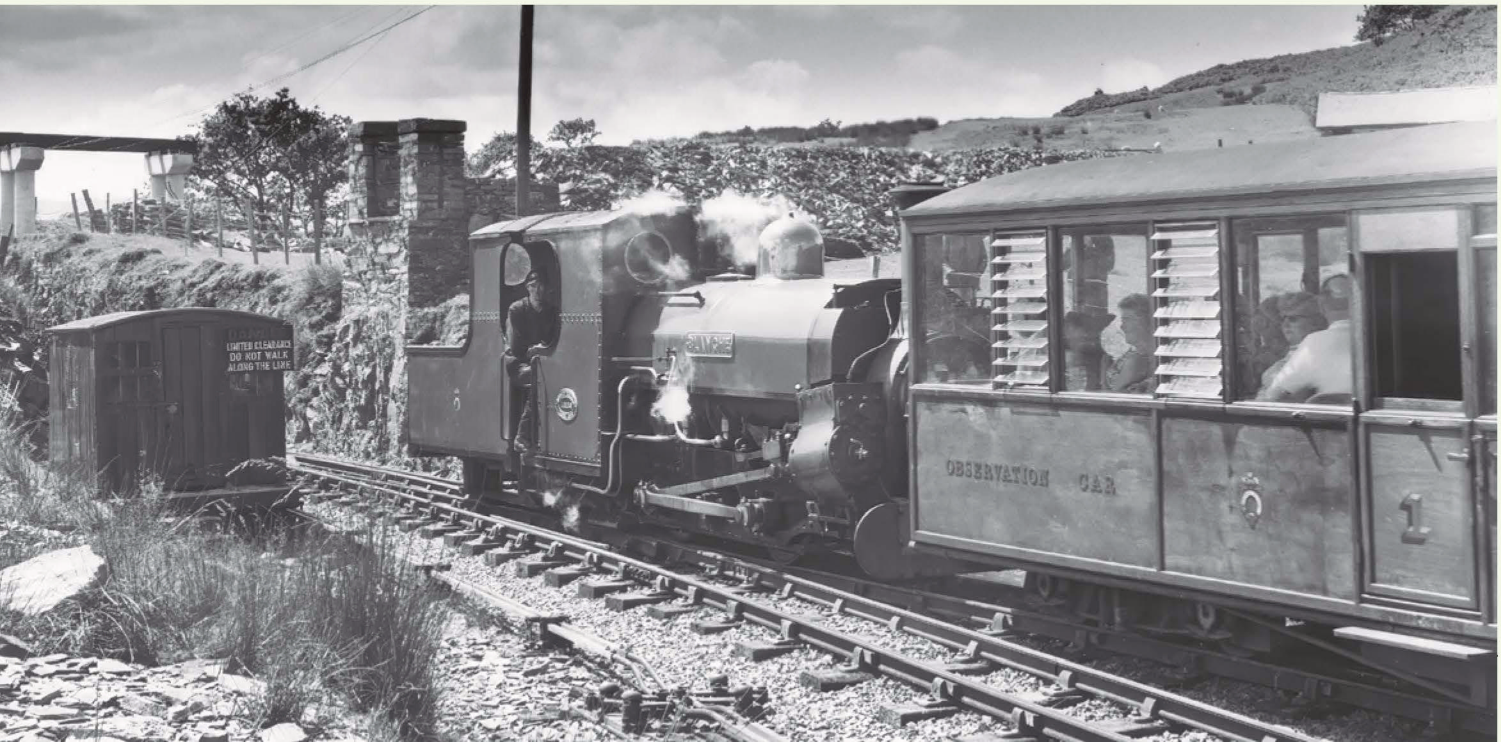
The southern exit from Ffestiniog Tunnel through Moel Dyrnogydd and the heaps of slate spoil surrounding it. (Peter Heath/ Oxfordshire Railway Society)

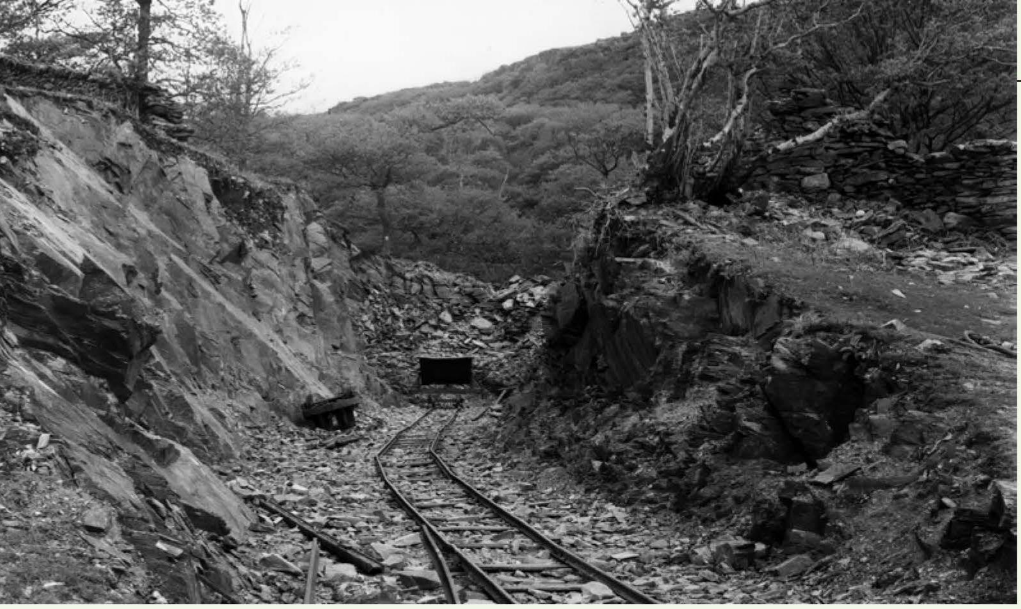
END IN WALES IN 1968

alighted to adjourn to another platform while our train changed to diesel traction before proceeding to Barrow-in-Furness. Like many other main line stations in the 1960s, Crewe was a hive of nocturnal activity with trains arriving and departing and huge quantities of mailbags and parcels being loaded, unloaded and moved about.

After a brief wait we took a train along the North Wales coast to Llandudno Junction, behind Class 40 No.D338, arriving at 04.08 giving us about an hour to wait for the first train along the former London & North Western Railway Conwy Valley line to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Now, I'm sure that Llandudno Junction is a fine place but at that time of night, with a fine drizzle blowing in from the coast, it didn't have much going for it. Fortunately, we were able to adjourn to the small waiting room that, despite having all the ambience and charm of a prison cell, at least sheltered us from the rain. It was midsummer's day but remarkably chilly and we were encouraged to note that the room was equipped with an, albeit rather feeble, electric fire affixed to the wall above one of the two hard wooden benches. We switched it on, the temperature increased very marginally and and we sat down to doze but, after a couple of minutes, we were dismayed to observe that the heater automatically switched off, requiring one of us to get up and push the

***Blanche* with the 10.00am to Portmadoc leaving Dduallt on 29th July 1969, with construction works of the new deviation line to avoid at a higher level the CEGB lake which had flooded the original route to Blaenau Ffestiniog.** (T. J. Edgington)





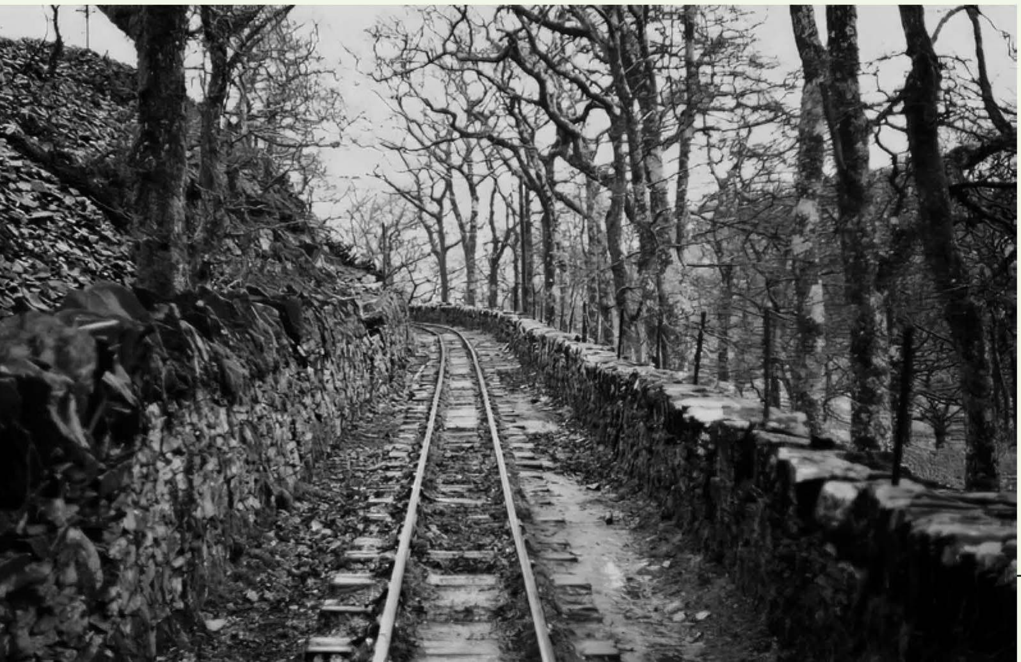
Deviation work in progress at Dduallt on 25th May 1970 to create the new 'spiral' which would carry the FR over its original course to gain height. (T. J. Edgington)

plunger to re-activate it. We spent a very busy time, under the garishly bright neon lights, alternating between dozing fitfully and switching the heater back on.

Eventually, after what seemed like an eternity, we boarded the train down the Valley that departed at about 05.00 and delivered us to Blaenau Ffestiniog about an hour later. The journey along the valley is one of the most scenic on BR but it was a very dark start to the day with low cloud and persistent heavy drizzle so I wasn't really able to appreciate it fully. Moreover, having been deprived of a night's sleep I nodded off in the cosy warmth of the first generation disel multiple unit and didn't wake up until we were rumbling through the 2½ miles-long Ffestiniog Tunnel and then we arrived at Blaenau Ffestiniog North station. At one time the London & North Western Railway line from Llandudno connected with a Great Western Railway branch line down to Bala. That line had closed some eight years before our visit but had been retained as far as Trawsfynedd to serve a nuclear power station. To the south of the station were overgrown tracks of the old Ffestiniog Railway that had been abandoned in 1946.

I had been looking forward to a hearty breakfast but I was destined to be disappointed as, at that time of the morning in those days before the town became a tourist destination, there was, apparently, nowhere serving breakfast – or anything else come to that – and the weather deterred us from exploring too far. En route to the bus station we found a small newsagent's shop which was open and we bought a stock of biscuits and a ginger cake to keep us going. After a wait at the bus station – no waiting room or heater here – we caught a Crosville bus which took us through the mountains shrouded in low cloud to Minffordd in about 45 minutes. At that time Minffordd was served by a goods yard linked to BR's standard gauge Cambrian Coast line which stretched from Shrewsbury to Pwhelli via Porthmadog and freight could be transferred between BR and FR by way of exchange sidings. In this yard was located the volunteer accommodation that we were to use for the weekend.

Part of the abandoned route of the Ffestiniog Railway above Dduallt, taken on 10th April 1975 (it was snowing at the time). The old route as far as the flooded Moelwyn Tunnel saw occasional use until the completion of the new tunnel; this was for supply trains and such to the 'tunnel mess', probably cleared of undergrowth but not much else. (Author)



The accommodation was a caravan, provided by the area group of volunteers that my colleague belonged to; it was basically sound but had certainly seen better days. It didn't let the rain in, which was just as well as a steady downpour had set in by then, but was fairly damp and musty inside and it was pretty chilly as the only heating was provided by an antique gas fire that tended to splutter a lot but not give out much warmth. I was assured that the larder was well-stocked but the only contents were tea bags, so that we could organise a very welcome brew, some soggy biscuits and bizarrely, copious quantities of jelly cubes in a variety of flavours. Undeterred. we made some tea and ate some biscuits and neat jelly cubes.

The rain stopped after an hour or so and in order to earn our keep, we spent a few hours transferring locomotive coal from standard gauge wagons into FR wagons to be taken down to Boston Lodge. When that task was completed we took the train to Porthmadog (or Portmadoc as it was known then) where we enjoyed very large portions of fish and chips in the station cafe before catching a late afternoon train to Dduallt, in 1968 the end of the line. This was my first visit to the Ffestiniog Railway and having always been fascinated by narrow gauge railways, I greatly enjoyed the experience, especially chugging along that part of the journey where the railway squeezes through narrow gaps hemmed in by walls fashioned from grey slates. The rain had not returned and the sun came out, affording wonderful views of Snowdonia at its best. We arrived at Dduallt where the locomotive (*Blanche* if I recall correctly after all this time) ran round to take us on the return journey. The restoration of the railway is a story for another day but it had been reopened by volunteers in stages from 1955, reaching Minffordd a year later and Dduallt a few months before my visit. The extraordinarily ambitious and complex project to extend the railway beyond Dduallt had commenced in 1965 and 'deviationists' were working on the new spiral at the time of my visit. Trains operated on this spiral in 1977 through to Tanygrisiau in 1978 and finally through to Blaenau Ffestiniog in 1982, a fantastic achievement involving a marathon legal battle against the Central Electricity Generating Board, which had flooded the original route of the railway with a new reservoir and civil engineering on an epic scale.

During the return journey the skies darkened and the rain returned so, rather than trudge around in search of somewhere to dine we returned to the caravan for cups of tea and jelly cubes. There was an ancient wind-up gramophone provided complete with just one record, a 1932 recording of a strange song entitled 'Ain't it grand to be blooming well dead' by a chap called Leslie Sarony. I recall playing it several times in an attempt to drown out the sound of the rain drumming on the roof of the caravan. I listened to this recording on You Tube recently and was immediately transported back to June 1968 munching jelly cubes in that damp, slightly mouldy caravan in the goods yard.

One of the abandoned tunnels in the Aberglaslyn Pass on the Welsh Highland Railway, on 10th April 1975. (Author)

After a breakfast of tea and jelly cubes we departed at 8.00am on the Sunday morning for the journey home. It's difficult to imagine in today's world but in much of Wales on Sundays in 1968, apart from a wide selection of chapels of various denominations and the occasional newsagent's shop, pretty well everything was closed. There were no cafes, restaurants, pubs or shops which were open for business and public transport was almost non-existent. There were no trains on the Conwy Valley Line or on the Cambrian Coast line and no buses so we had decided to make for Bangor on the north coast where a (limited) Sunday service was provided. This was about 30 miles away and we were hopeful that we could hitch a lift – hitchhiking in those days was still regarded as being a perfectly reasonable and popular way to get about.

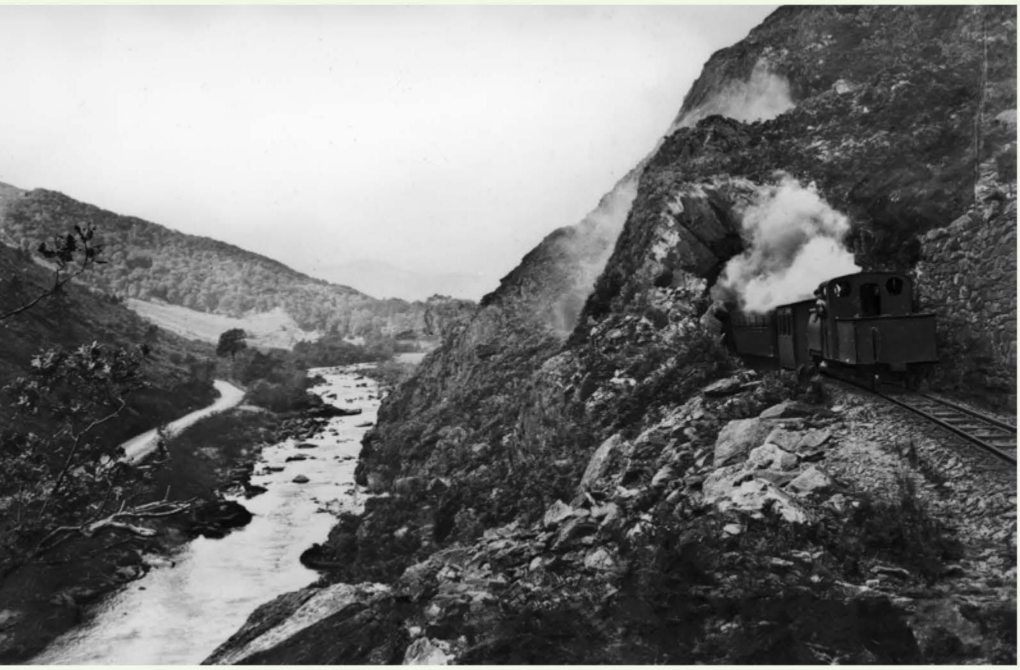
It was quite cold but the overnight heavy rain had reduced to a wind-blown drizzle, conditions that were not too bad for walking though we were not very well equipped having travelled in lightweight casual clothes with showerproof (allegedly) jackets and the same shoes that we wore to work.

We set off in a northerly direction and after less than a mile a kind-hearted soul stopped and provided us with a lift for a couple of miles. Owing to the fact that pretty well everything was closed there was little traffic about so I suppose the sight of people hitchhiking was not unusual. The next part of the odyssey involved walking along the road through the Aberglaslyn Pass which, even in that weather, was stunningly beautiful with the river in full spate after the rain. I spotted, on the other side of the river, a ledge running parallel to the road and was informed that it was the trackbed of the former Welsh Highland Railway which had closed in 1937. I remarked that it would make a superb attraction if it could be reopened and was told that there was absolutely no chance whatsoever that this would ever happen as, apart from any other factors such as cost, there was simply not enough room or potential business for two narrow gauge railways in that area. I reluctantly agreed with that general principle and never, in my wildest dreams, imagined that it could ever be reinstated but, after Herculean efforts, it came back to life just 31 years later and today is a major attraction combined with its old rival the Ffestiniog Railway.

Sustained by some more of the caravan's enormous supply of jelly cubes, we plodded on and altogether we were fortunate enough to obtain lifts for a total of around eighteen miles – but had to walk (on roads) for the other twelve or so miles. I'm sure that, beneath the low cloud and the driven drizzle, the scenery was magnificent but the journey became an endless slog and an effort just to keep plodding along, so little attention was paid to our surroundings. We finally reached Bangor station in the late afternoon but were informed that there was a nationwide industrial dispute with much disruption of train services. Our luck was in and we found that, although the service had been reduced to virtually nothing, there would be a train to Crewe some time after five o'clock and at 17.25 in rolled No.D333 which whistled us along the North Wales coast to Crewe in a little under two hours.

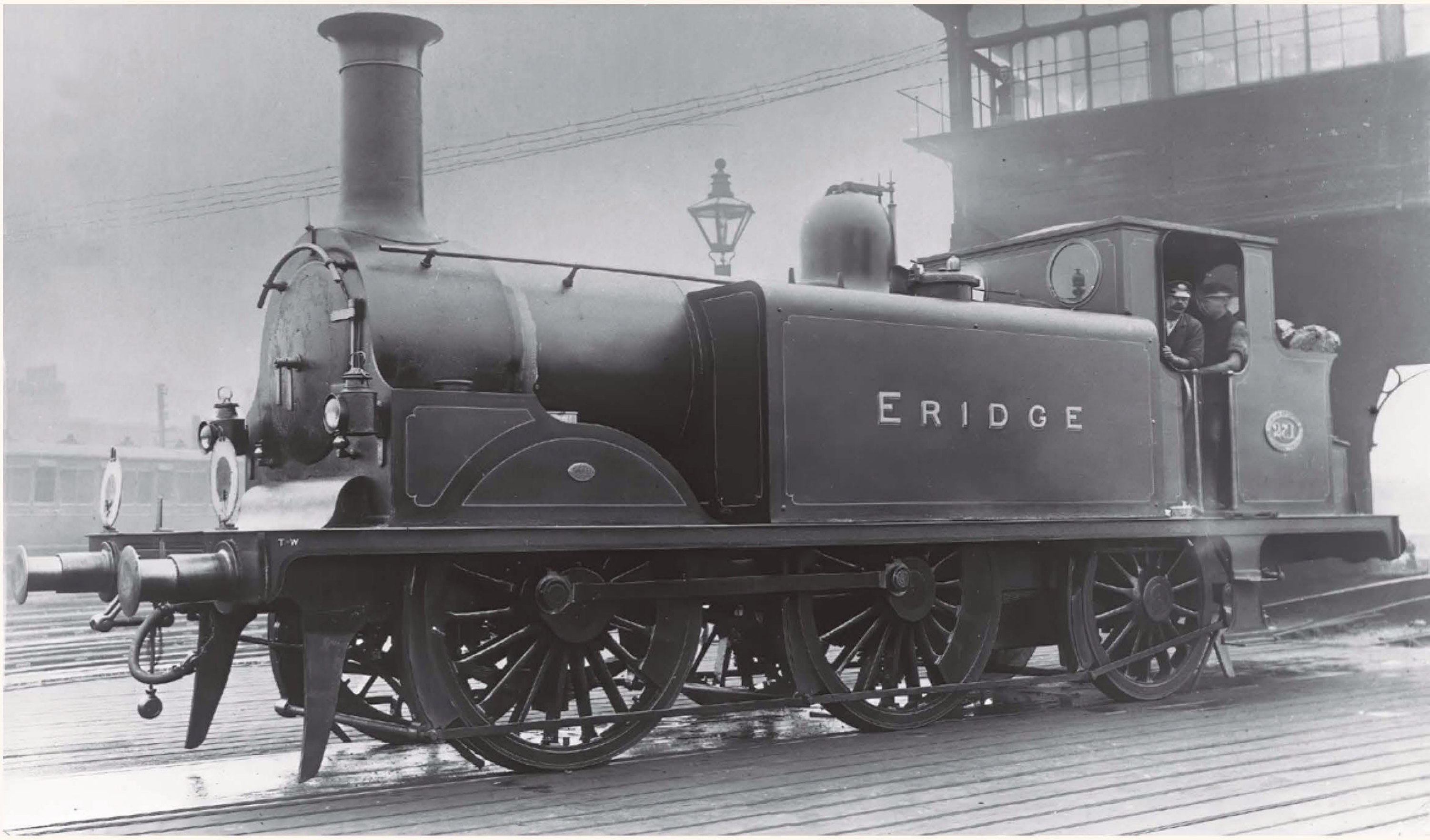
There was an ominous scene on arrival, an unnatural silence, no trains arriving or departing and just a few disconsolate-looking people hanging about with a sign indicating that services were being severely curtailed owing to industrial action. An announcement was made stating that there would be no more trains from Crewe that night so we started to think about what we could possibly do. But then a member of staff approached us and informed us that there would, within a few minutes, be a train going non-stop to Euston as a London-based crew were keen to get home and were prepared to work the train in spite of the industrial action. Electric locomotive No.E3192 backed on to some coaches and we were urged to get across to that platform and board the train. After just a couple of minutes we set off in a virtually empty train and ran non-stop via Northampton to Euston. It was a surreal journey, running at line speed under clear signals on a deserted railway. Nowhere during the two hours or so did we see on this, the busiest main line on BR, a single other train going in either direction, passenger or freight – an unusual, if not unique, experience.

One of the FR's England 0-4-0STs in the Aberglaslyn Pass en route to Portmadoc in the 1930s. The road followed by the author in 1968 is seen on the left of the river. Travellers on the revived Welsh Highland will find a considerably more sylvan setting along the river today! (T. J. Edgington Collection)



On arrival we found that Euston had more or less closed but we were able to get to the Underground and travel across to Waterloo which was also just shutting down with one final departure scheduled – all stations to Wimbledon. Luckily I was able to phone home in Dorking as my parents had recently had a telephone installed and persuade my brother, who had just passed his driving test, to drive up to Wimbledon and run me home where I finally arrived at about midnight.

It had been an interesting weekend in many ways and taught me the wisdom of thorough planning and of taking the precaution of always having a waterproof coat and shoes. I have travelled on the reinstated Welsh Highland Railway on several occasions in recent years and can confirm that is is, as I stated all those years ago, a wonderful journey and has proved to be extremely popular – but I have never, since then, resorted to eating raw jelly cubes.



LBSCR D Class 0-4-2T No.271 *Eridge* was built at Brighton Works in May 1880 but was an early withdrawal in June 1928 in a batch considered surplus to the Southern Railway's requirements at that time. (Pendragon Collection)

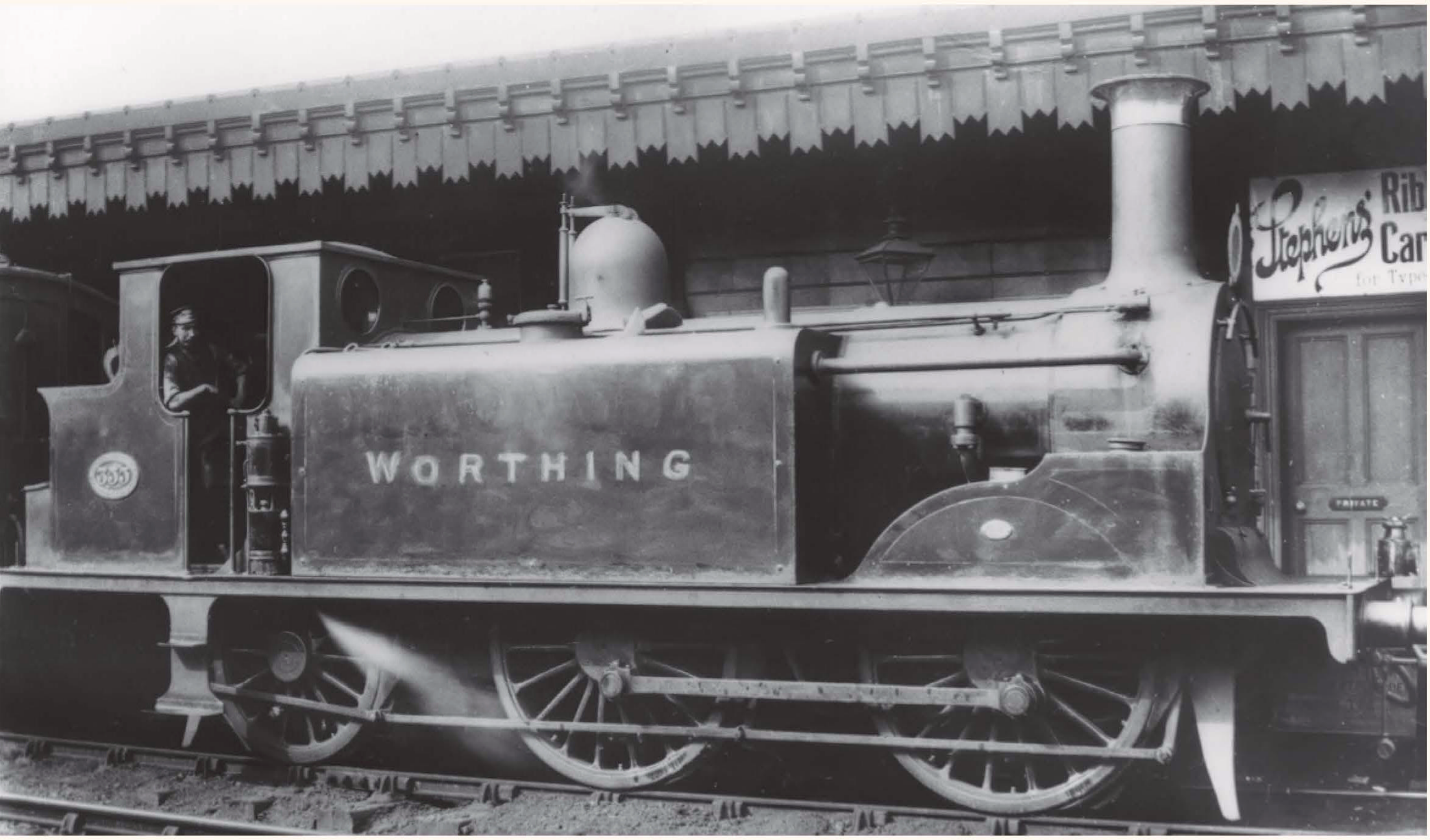
WILLIAM STROUDLEY'S D

BY JEREMY CLARKE

As well as being what Brian Haresnape describes as an able and professional engineer, William Stroudley was very much also an artist. I don't doubt those who have seen any of his locomotives pictured or, better still, in preservation, even those enthusiasts who have little interest in the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway or any railway south of the Thames, would disagree with that. The minute A Class 'Terriers' and the ground-breaking B, the 'Gladstones', are the best-known of all the engines he introduced to the Brighton. But I would suggest the D Class 0-4-2T of 1873 epitomised his approach to locomotive design, for they were exactly suited to the work for which they were designed, tough, durable and in some cases of remarkable longevity.

Born at Sandford-upon-Thames in Oxfordshire on 6th March 1833, Stroudley went as a boy to work alongside his father at a local paper mill before spending time in Birmingham with various firms concentrating mainly on the manufacture and erection of stationary engines. But in 1853 he came under the influence of Daniel Gooch at Swindon, though a year later was offered a position in Australia. However, he was dissuaded from emigrating and instead went to the Great Northern at Peterborough under the command of Archibald Sturrock, another Swindon 'product', though he reported directly to Charles Sacré, later Locomotive Superintendent of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway. Four years on, at the age of 28, he was appointed Manager of the Edinburgh & Glasgow Junction Railway's Cowlairs Works in Glasgow. Shortly afterwards Samuel Johnson also came to work for that company, but senior to Stroudley. Despite the fact both in time produced aesthetically beautiful engines in luscious

No.355 *Worthing* entered service in May 1886 as part of the final lot of D tanks. It lasted late into Southern days in August 1946. (Rail Archive Stephenson)



The superb LBSCR station at Heathfield sees No.298, formerly No.35 *Southwark*, arrive with an Eastbourne train. Though in Marsh umber, the engine retains its Stroudley chimney. (Lens of Sutton Collection)

TANKS ON THE BRIGHTON

liveries, the two soon developed an intense dislike of one another. Perhaps the fall-out was due to their artistic temperaments.

Stroudley's next opportunity came in July 1865 when he was appointed Locomotive, Carriage & Wagon Superintendent of the Highland Railway, newly-formed by amalgamations. At first he may very well have considered himself fortunate, for there were no fewer than 31 applicants for the post. However, financially the Highland was a very poor company and gave Stroudley little scope to express himself though he rebuilt some 'singles' into successful 2-4-0s and updated the Lochgorm workshops. It was not until 1869 that he produced his first Highland engine, albeit a small shunting 0-6-0T which contained a number of second-hand parts including the wheels and boiler barrel. However, it carried not just the beautifully-lined out ochre livery that was to become his later trademark, but also the typical cab with the toolbox behind it. (The bunker was on the offside forward of the cab.)

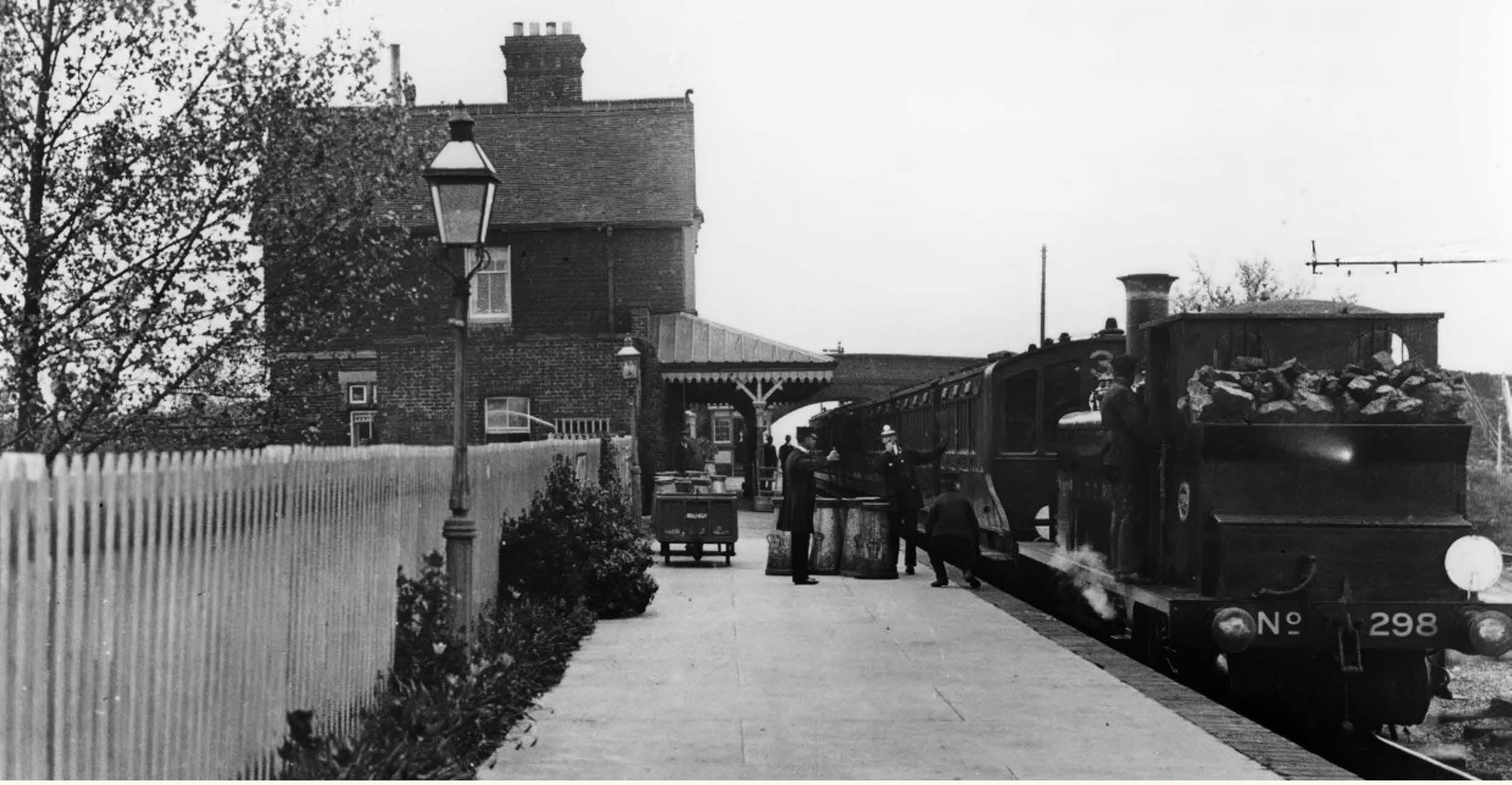
Shortly after this he went to Brighton to succeed John Chester Craven of whom Hamilton Ellis wrote "... [nobody] could find an atom of amiability or humour in [his] character..." (Bill Aves rather mildly describes the regime under Craven as idiosyncratic.) There could be no greater contrast between the two for Craven was "always harsh and bigoted" and "sometimes violent and cruel" (CHE). But Stroudley, although a martinet in his own way, had already proved himself an excellent man-manager, following Gooch's practice of knowing every man who worked for him. Perhaps that showed best in each engine being allocated to a particular driver whose name and the mileage run was then painted inside the cab front. And although no less Victorian than Craven in matters of discipline, he soon came to be regarded as a just man and considerate chief. In such ways Stroudley gained more than mere respect from his staff.

Among Stroudley's first essays, during which time he was also concerned with modernising and redesigning the layout of Brighton Works, was the reconstruction of some Craven 'singles' which had come from Robert Stephenson in 1864. One of these re-emerged as the famous *Sussex,* still a 'single' but with a new and bigger boiler, having his favoured Salter safety valves on the dome and the copper-capped chimney that became his standard. It was the only one of its class but renowned as a fast and powerful engine.

More significantly perhaps, Stroudley found himself with two 0-4-2Ts of Craven's design authorised though with only a minimum of work started on them. Using some of those prepared parts he changed the design from double-framed saddle-tanks to inside-framed engines with side tanks. Numbered 18 and 21, they were without cabs but had the copper-capped chimney. Following a derailment of No.21 while the pair was engaged on London suburban services, Stroudley modified the springing and sent the engine variously to Brighton, Eastbourne and Horsham sheds. It became evident these workings formed a trial as Stroudley pursued his ideas for building engines with this wheel arrangement. The pair was later renumbered respectively 373 and 467, the former being withdrawn in May 1886 while the latter soldiered on for another two years.

Having introduced his C Class 0-6-0 goods engines, the 'Jumbos', and completed the six 2-4-0 'Belgravias' whose frames Craven had ordered from Avonside because Brighton was incapable of cutting the plates, attention turned to the A Class 0-6-0T, the 'Terriers'. The first six were introduced between September and December 1872. (Batches followed to September 1880 by which time 50 engines were in service.) So, with the start made on solving the problem of working inner-suburban trains over relatively poor track with frequent stops, Stroudley turned to designing an engine to take the place of the various Craven specimens handling the outer suburban work where stops were less frequent and speeds rather higher. In the main Craven preferred tender engines for such services. Stroudley decided to make matters simpler by using tank engines instead, thus eliminating the need for turning at the end of each journey. And this is where the trials with No.21 bore fruit: Stroudley settled on an 0-4-2T.

The D Class appeared in 1873, No.1 *Sydenham,* the first of a lot of six, on 25th November, the rest of the lot by the year's end. The inside cylinders were 17in x 24in, driving wheels 5ft 6in and the trailing wheel beneath the cab, a large 4ft 6in diameter. That became the general diameter for Stroudley's trailing and tender wheels though his trademark inside-framed tender had yet to appear. But here was an indication of his intent on standardising parts to minimise the number of patterns required, to reduce both the costs of construction and, perhaps most importantly,



No.298 again, calling at Hellingly with an Eastbourne to Tunbridge Wells train. The nearest carriage is a Stroudley brake third. (Lens of Sutton Collection)

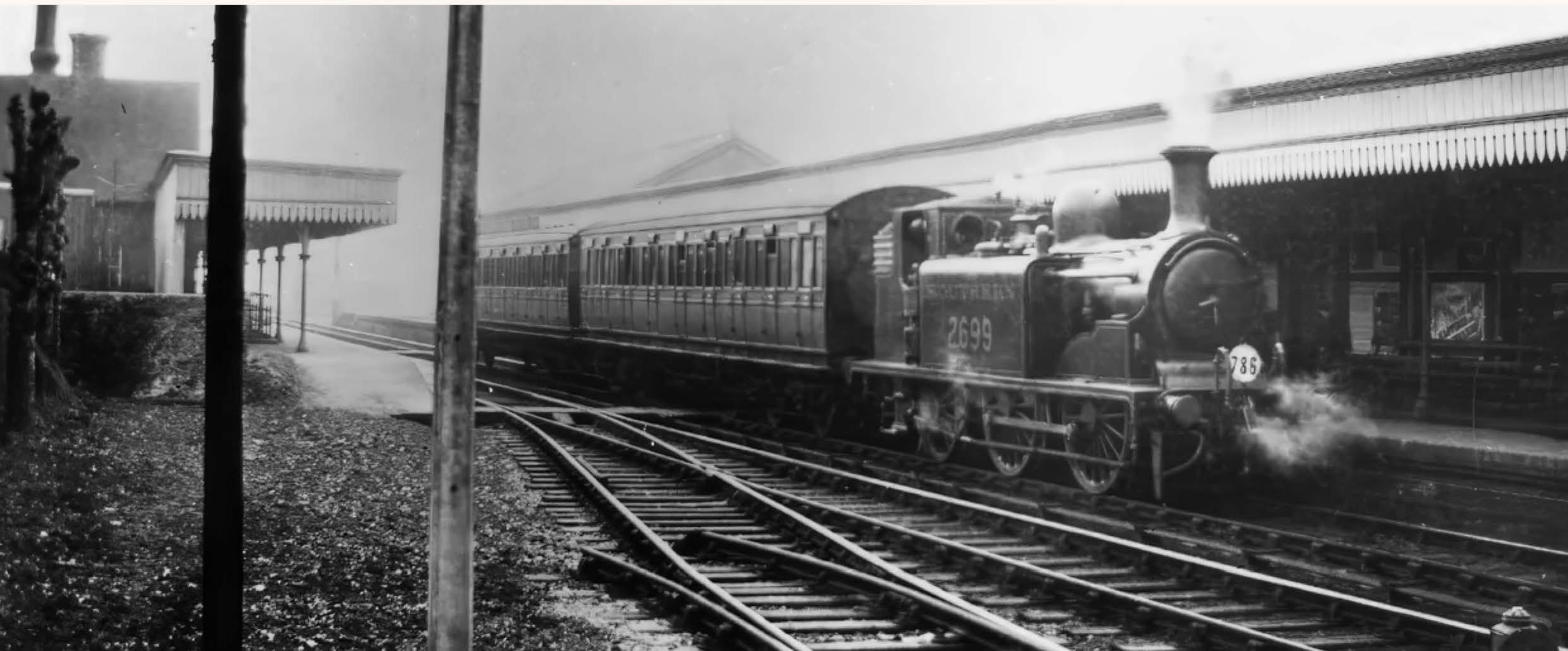
capital tied up in a wealth of different spares. This approach was something quite new to the Brighton board which had only just begun to question Craven's completely opposite view, that specific engines had to be designed for specific work in specific places. It was as though he had an almost childlike delight in designing engines for their own sake, use of anything 'standard' thus being an anathema to him. (It has to be said there was nothing otherwise childlike about Craven!) But I wonder if the Board would have permitted continued use of Stroudley's 'Improved Engine Green' livery with its expensive and involved lining out had such savings not been made.*

The 15ft wheelbase of the D was divided 7ft 7"+7ft 5in, the overall length of the engine being 31ft 7½in. The three ring boiler, having a maximum diameter of 4ft with the dome on the third ring, contained a total heating surface of 933sq ft, of which the firebox, with a grate area of 15¼sq ft, contributed 88sq ft. Pressure was 140psi which, at 85%, provided a tractive effort of 12,506lb.

The bunker held 1½ tons of coal and the tanks 860 gallons making the engine weight in working order 38½ tons, of which 27 tons was adhesive, divided equally. One peculiarity to modern day eyes were the massive wooden brake blocks. Later batches were equipped with cast iron blocks following improvements made to sanding gear in 1879. The first so equipped was No.26 *Baynards,* prior to delivery in June 1880. Some of the earlier members of the class were fitted retrospectively. Stroudley also provided screw reverse rather than the usual massive lever with its 'fixed' coarse notches, making it possible for a driver to work his engine most economically.

Nine engines appeared in 1874, another nine in 1875 and twelve in 1876. With few exceptions these bore London suburban names. Now with 36 in traffic, numbered consecutively 1-36, real inroads could begin to be made into the more venerable and inefficient Craven outer-suburban motive power. No.15 *Silverdale,* of March 1875, was the first D and, in fact, the first Brighton engine to have the driver's name and mileage painted in the cab. The first fitting of Westinghouse brake gear went to No.5 *Rotherfield.* All these engines and, indeed, the class as a whole were fitted with Stroudley's condensing system in which a proportion of the exhaust was turned back into the tanks to heat the feedwater. Feed pumps were thus required as injectors – apparatus Stroudley would not touch – did not operate with hot water. (At this time the pumps were worked by eccentrics on the leading axle: it was not unknown to see an engine scurrying up and down the length of the platform at, say, London Bridge, in order to top up the boiler. Weir feed pumps appeared rather later.)

In 1910 Marsh rebuilt No.20 *Carshalton,* with a boiler of 4ft 6in diameter, nevertheless of slightly reduced heating surface, though the pressure was raised to 170psi. The higher pitch demanded comparable changes to the cab roof and footplate. Weight increased by five tons. The general opinion is that this was not an improvement, especially as the higher boiler pitch made the engine rather unsteady at anything over 40mph or thereabouts. No more received the treatment to become Class D1Xwhich rather confirms the opinion.

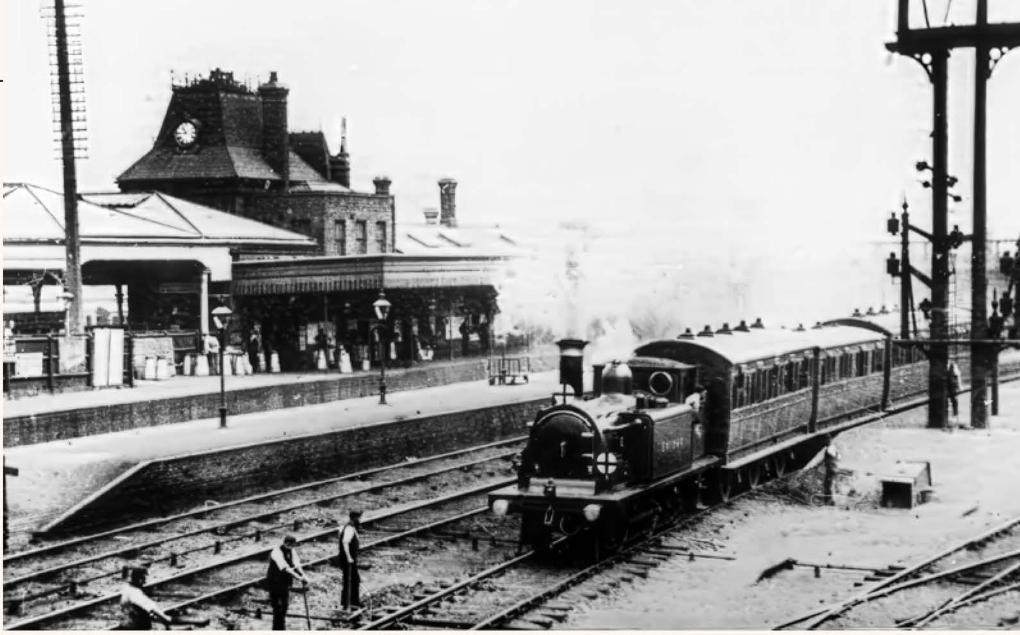


No.2699, originally No.36 *New Cross*, is at Hailsham with an Eastbourne train. (Lens of Sutton Collection)

Carshalton was scrapped in 1934 though it is believed the boiler – or the shell at any rate – was recovered for further use.

The first of the 36 to meet the cutter's torch was No.3 *Battersea* in 1903: nine more had gone before the First World War. It is probable frame corrosion provided the cause for a proportion of withdrawals though some of the cylinder blocks also turned out to be in poor condition, perhaps because of the chemistry of the iron in them. Marsh salvaged some pieces, particularly wheels, coupling and connecting rods and parts of the motion for reuse in the early members of the I1 Class of 1907.

Exactly half the 36 came to the Southern Railway, four of them, Nos.5, 6, 18 and 36, lasting into national ownership. No.6 of this lot, *Wimbledon,* was the first of the class to receive a Billinton boiler, while Nos.5 *Streatham* and 18 *Stockwell* were motor-fitted using compressed air control. (No.27 *Uckfield,* of April 1876, was the first in the class to be motor-fitted, in 1905. For a while it was also oil-fired.)



No.271 *Eridge* leaves Clapham Junction at the beginning of the twentieth century. The headcode signifies a Portsmouth line train via Sutton though it is probable it will travel no further south than Dorking. (Lens of Sutton Collection)

Six more Ds appeared in 1877, Nos.292-7, though these and all the others in the class, extant and planned, were reclassified D1 upon introduction of the tender version of the class as D2 in 1876. This particular batch arrived in haphazard numerical order. Three of them, Nos.295-7, sported Isle of Wight names though regal No.296 *Osborne,* later found itself downgraded to plebeian *Peckham.* (As the LBSCR was joint owner with the London & South Western Railway of the line in Ryde from Pierhead to St. John's Road, such naming was justified.) In view of the names given to the large number which followed, that of *Norbury,* as applied to No.293, was probably after Norbury Park near Dorking rather than the London suburb of that name. All six were scrapped by the Southern with only Nos.294 and 297 acquiring the additional 2000 to their numbers post-1931.

A hiatus of eighteen months was followed by introduction of another half-dozen numbered 286-91, in June 1879. Nos.280-5 appeared in October and 274-9 in December. May 1880 saw Nos.269-73 emerge from the works though again, as seemed to be the Brighton's way, not in the order of numbering. With the odd exception these carried names of Wealden locations, including some major estates. Eleven of them lasted long enough to receive the additional SR 2000 to the number after 1931 and of these five, Nos.269 *Crawley,* 274 *Guildford,* 283 *Aldgate*, 286 *Ranmore* and 289 *Holmbury* survived into nationalisation, Nos.269, 283 and 289 being motor-fitted. As noted earlier, No.268, the lowest numbered of this lot of 30 but the last into service, in June 1880, was the first D to have iron brake blocks.

Another fifteen months elapsed before 34 more appeared over the period October 1881 to November 1882. These were built by Neilson's and numbered 233-267 though the first numbered was additional to this lot and the last into traffic and that in March 1883. It contained a half set of motion that had been sent to Neilson's as a pattern and thus was known to that doyen of Brighton commentators, Frank Burtt, as 'the pattern engine'. It has been suggested the delay in delivery may have been because the contract was originally for thirty-four units only and the thirty-fifth was built to a later contract because the pattern happened to be remaining in Neilson's works and the company wanted shot of it.

Once again we find ourselves in Wealden and Downs country with the names, indicative perhaps of the more distant work the class had been undertaking. Only one of these, No.263 *Purley,* did not come into Southern service, withdrawn in 1913 due to frame failure. Most were still at work into the 1930s, half of them receiving the additional post-1931 addition of 2000 to their numbers. Six survived to nationalisation, all being motor-fitted. They were Nos.234 *Rottingdean*, 235 *Broadwater,* 239 *Patcham,* 240 *Ditchling,* 252 *Buckhurst* and 253 *Selham*.

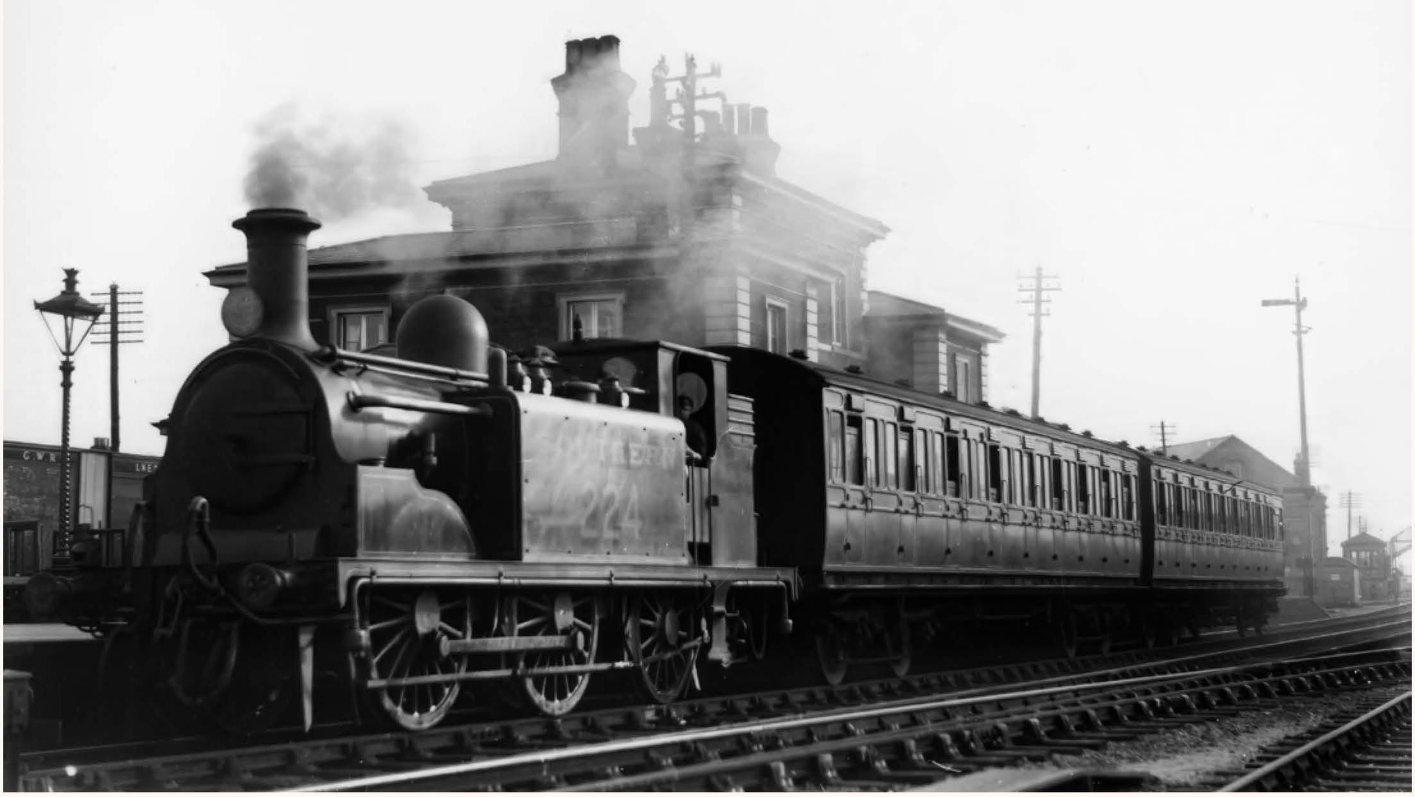
Brighton recommenced construction in June 1884 though the process was quite drawn out. Two or three engines emerged each month but not necessarily in consecutive months until the last of this lot's twenty-four units came into service in December 1886. Numbers were 221-232, though haphazardly, (231 first, 223 last!), and 351-362, these actually appearing in strict numerical order.

Boilers in these engines had been modified to provide a heating surface of 977sq ft, a slightly increased grate area of 15½sq ft and pressure raised to 150psi. Tractive effort increased accordingly, to 13,400lb. Robert Billinton later provided boilers of similar dimensions though with the pressure beneficially increased again, to 160psi. Of these, No.285 *Holmwood,* was given a steel boiler, the first to receive one. Tractive effort at the usual 85%BP rose to 14,292lb. Names again tended to concentrate on the Sussex coast and countryside though Surrey got a look in – *Dorking, Coulsdon* and *Riddlesdown* for examples – as did, surprisingly at first glance perhaps, *Kidbrooke*. This is likely to have been named after the Grade II listed Kidbrooke Lodge, near Forest Row in Sussex, rather than the locality to be found in the London Borough of Greenwich. (As a matter of interest the ex-South Eastern Railway Bexleyheath line on which Greenwich's Kidbrooke station stands did not open until May 1895, more than eight years after No.362 emerged from the works. The landowners along the route had for some years been making unsuccessful appeals to the South Eastern to build the line. In the end they formed the 'Bexley Heath Railway Company' in 1885 to take on the project. One of the leading lights and for some time the company chairman was a Col. Barne who had an estate, principally of woodland, to the west of Dartford. The local station he had built for his use became Barnehurst. The company was absorbed by the South Eastern after being declared bankrupt in 1897.)

Nine D1s were fitted for firefighting in 1940, the pumps being mounted behind the bunker, which required removal of Stroudley's trademark toolbox. They were – by this time – Nos.2215, 2220, 2239, 2244, 2252, 2253, 2255, 2260 and 2357. One of these, No.2244, formerly *Hassocks,* had the equipment modified to pump oil during the short-lived Government-sponsored post-war oil-firing scheme. No.2284 *Ashburnham* was similarly equipped, the two transferring to Service stock as Nos.700s and 701s respectively. All the conversions were returned to normal condition by nationalisation other than '701s'.

While with the effects of wartime, it is worth mentioning seven engines were loaned to the London Midland & Scottish Railway, being posted to Liverpool and Scotland. Indeed, No.36 *New Cross,* by now nameless of course and carrying the number 2699, spent some time working the Lybster Light Railway out of Wick shed, being about as far away from Brighton as one could get in mainland Britain. Some irony, too, in that a Stroudley engine should find itself at the extremity of the Highland Railway long after its designer had gone south. No.27 *Uckfield,* by then No.627, was condemned by the LMS in 1943 due to firebox damage. The others were back on the Southern by 1944 except for No.2286. After return by the LMS it was purloined by the Government for work on the Melbourne and Longmoor Military Railways, just surviving nationalisation, withdrawal coming in July 1948.

On the subject of boilers, those engines that had not been refitted by Billinton received new Marsh ones. These were of two rings only, with the dome on the second ring, rather larger than either of his predecessors considered necessary, and Ramsbottom safety valves



No.224 *Crowhurst* stands at Rye station before hauling the 6.10pm to Hastings on 29th August 1931.
(T. J. Edgington Collection)

on a manhole over the firebox. The whistle was moved to the front of the cab roof. These boilers carried 170lb pressure though the heating surface was reduced to 924sq ft, the grate area being the same as in the Billinton type. Tractive effort rose again, to 15,185lb at 85%BP. The weight also went up, to 43½ tons.

Most engines lost their Stroudley chimney in Marsh's time, receiving instead his cast iron one of rather fatter proportions. A few even managed to acquire the heavily-lipped Drummond chimney in Southern days. Marsh also fitted coal rails to the bunkers to increase capacity and, at the same time, as a by-product, reduce Stroudley's carefully-planned visibility to the rear. Repainting in umber began in 1905, soon after Marsh's arrival, the names disappearing under it at the behest of the Brighton board, though No361 *Upperton,* somehow managed to retain its for a while. The livery was lined in orange, black and yellow, the whole effecting an estimated cost saving of 45% per engine over Stroudley's ochre with its intricate lining. The board later relented to permit some engines to retain names though none of the D1s was so redecorated. Those engines that visited the paintshop early usually had 'LB&SCR' inscribed in full on the tank sides though Marsh later fixed on the simple 'LBSC'. A number of the motor-fitted engines had just 'L&B' writ large and ugly, much to the chairman's disgust. This was soon changed. In Southern days the engines were turned out in lined Maunsell green which suited them well with the number and 'Southern' on the tank sides. In Bulleid's time shaded 'sunshine' lettering identified them. Post-war unlined black prevailed though 'sunshine' lettering was retained. None apparently received either a BR number, logo or livery.

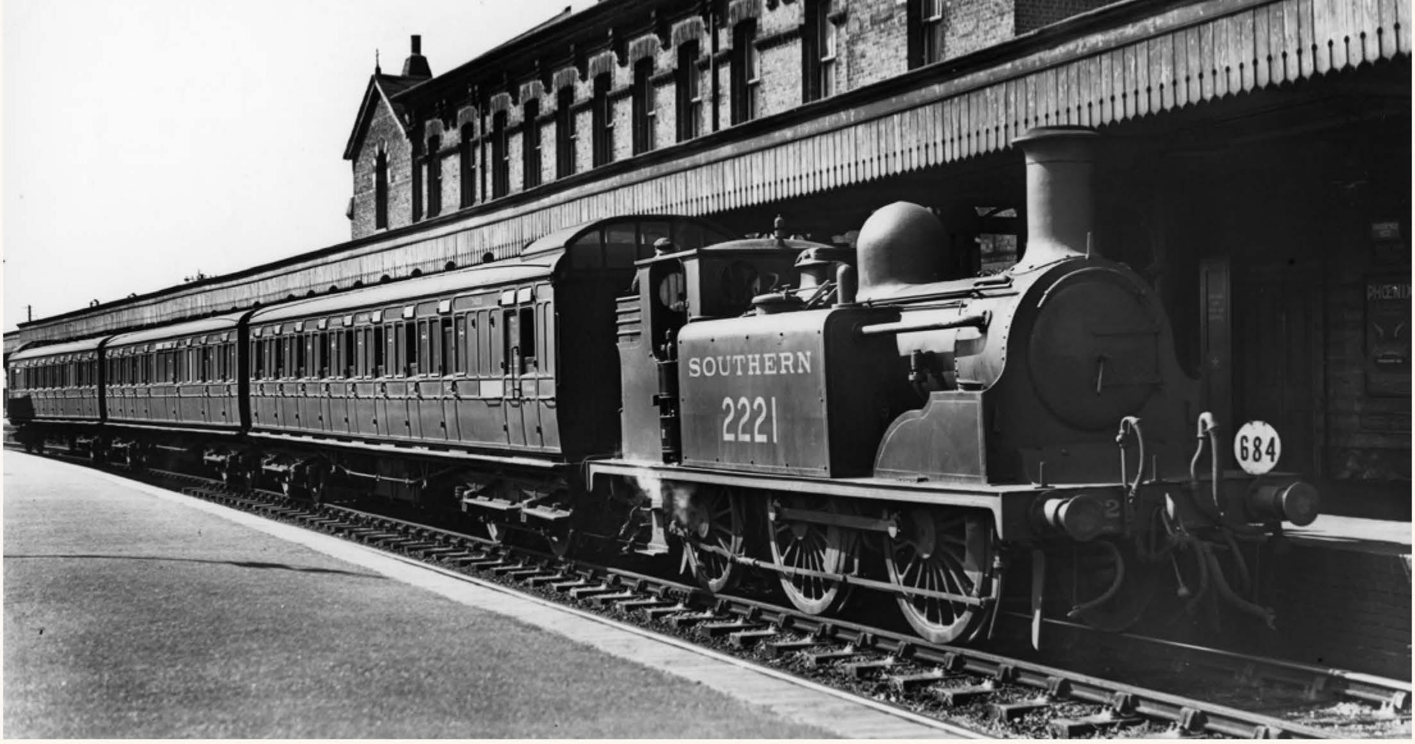
In view of their numbers it is not surprising they featured in several accidents. In September 1897, for example, No.297 derailed on a curve at the bottom of a dip between Heathfield and Mayfield on the sharply-graded Cuckoo Line. Regrettably the driver was killed, though there were no other fatalities despite one of the coach bodies parting company with its frames. (As opposed to his engines Stroudley's coaching stock was generally lightly, even flimsily built.) A similar derailment affected No.273 in April 1916 on the gradient between Crowborough and Buxted, though there were no deaths here. In both instances the state of the track was called into question. Four years later No.360 got into the street beyond Littlehampton station because a shunter had mixed up the brake hoses with those controlling the push/pull system. It appeared the guard had failed to test the brakes before the movement.

No.248 was extensively damaged in November 1919. Hauling the 7.20pm Victoria–Portsmouth train she was in collision at Streatham South Junction with I3 Class 4-4-2T No.24 running light from Eardley Sidings to Battersea. There were 40 cases of injury, some serious, but fortunately without fatalities. The I3 had mistakenly been signalled towards New Cross but, in stopping to have the road corrected, lay foul of the junction. The Inspecting Officer, Col. Pringle, laid the blame jointly on the driver and the signalman. No.248, the former *Ashurst,* returned to traffic with unique rectangular-topped side tanks specially made for it as well as a Marsh boiler and chimney. Oddly, however, Stroudley's condensing pipes were retained though it is uncertain if they were actually in use. As a matter of interest, this incident showed the work expected from the class at this time. No.248's train consisted of eight bogies, plus a six-wheeled van and a horsebox, a trailing load of around 250 tons gross, perhaps slightly more. And the Brighton's Portsmouth road was no sinecure with the sharp climbs from Mitcham to Sutton and in both directions to the high point of the Low Weald just south of Holmwood.

Toward the end of the 1920s the Southern's operators were looking around for suitable engines to relieve the ageing Adams 4-4-2T on the Axminster–Lyme Regis branch. The choice fell on the D1 tanks though some modifications were necessary, particularly to reduce weight. To that end Nos.276, 359, 612 and 633 (the two latter engines being among a score or so of the first 36 to have 600 added to their numbers in Brighton days to signify transfer to the Duplicate List) had the bunkers cut down and the side tank capacity reduced internally. Even for so small an engine with quite a short wheelbase the curves proved too much, just as they had for the smaller 'Terriers', Nos.46 and 68, which Dugald Drummond had purchased for the same duties in 1903.

While on movement to the Duplicate List, it should be noted Marsh in particular renumbered many of the engines in the early lot of 36. No.18 *Stockwell,* for example, became No.78 in February 1907, had an 'A' suffix added in November 1909 – a first indication of Duplication – then No.348 in March 1913 under Billinton the younger and finally No.215 in August 1920. The Southern added the post-1931 2000, old No.18 then being among the last withdrawn as No.2215 in February 1950, a few months short of its 75th birthday. (I do wonder, though, like 'Trigger's broom', how much of the original actually remained.) Few others were renumbered pre-grouping though the first three of the 1886 lot, No. 351-353, became 218-220 at the end of 1920. And as to name changes *à la Osborne,* No.272 *Nevill* – possibly from that area of Lewes – became *Goring* in August 1897 and No.294 *Rosebery* honoured *Falmer* instead from March that year.

None of the twenty in this final batch lasted very long in British Railways days, only three being in service in 1950. No.2252 – ex-252 *Buckhurst,* a motor-fitted Neilson engine from November 1881 – went in September that year. This was followed in July 1951 by No.2359, formerly *Egmont*, built at Brighton in December 1886, leaving No.701S, formerly No.284 *Ashburnham,* a Brighton engine into service in October 1879, the last of the class to be withdrawn, in December 1951. However, this was not the final D1 at work. In February 1948 No.2357 *Riddlesdown* was sold to Lancashire County Council for use on the private two-mile-long railway from Grimsaugh, on the short Lancashire & Yorkshire and London & North



SR No.2221, formerly named *Warbleton*, at Tunbridge Wells West with a Three Bridges and East Grinstead local. (Pendragon Collection)

Western Railways Joint Preston–Longbridge branch to the Whittingham Asylum. The hospital railway closed in 1957, the engine being unceremoniously scrapped at the same time. No doubt it was worn out but it is a pity that with the preservation movement already beyond its birth pangs the chance was not provided to at least attempt to save one of Stroudley's real, if unsung, masterpieces.

Stroudley has his foibles of course, besides preferring pumps to injectors. None of his engines had bogies and he turned out only seven bogie carriages, six firsts and an inspection saloon, and those in 1889, the year of his death. How his locomotive engineering would have progressed had he continued to resist the use of bogies can only be guessed at. However, it is known that at the time of his death in December 1889 he was planning an enlarged 'Gladstone' with a 2-4-2 wheel arrangement. It is also believed he contemplated developing a D1 with the same configuration. As it was, the class first introduced by his successor, Robert Billinton, was D3, an 0-4-4T, the first Brighton engine with a bogie since Craven's time. One cannot doubt, however, that it was Stroudley and his engines in their glorious livery and finish, epitomised by the Ds, that made the biggest contribution to the aura that the Brighton somehow attracted to itself during his years and which, in truth, continues to the present.

* * * * *

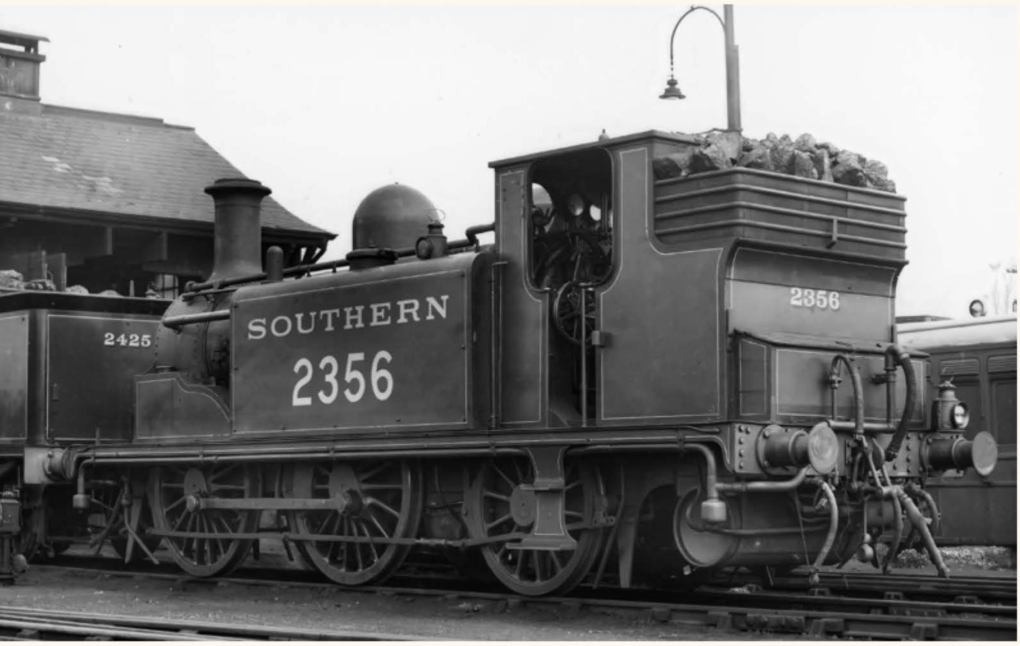
* For those not too familiar with the livery – and paraphrasing Hamilton Ellis's description – the yellow, in fact a golden ochre, almost an orange ochre, did have a touch of green in it. The borders were a dark olive green, the lining between the two consisting of a thin vermilion line, a broader black line and then a thin white line. The corners were turned in, giving the lining a degree of elegance. Boiler bands were black edged vermilion and then, outwards towards the yellow, olive green bands edged white. Frames were black outside, vermilion inside: that colour also applied to the motion plates and pumps.

Platform angles, buffer castings and the outer parts of the buffer beams were dark red (officially 'claret') while the valance below the running plate was edged yellow and then, going towards the dark red, in black and vermilion.

The buffer castings each had two black bands edged vermilion bisected with yellow lines. The vermilion central panel of the buffer beam was surrounded outwards towards the dark red by a white line, a black band, a yellow line, another black band and a vermilion line. The edges were black with an inner vermilion line. The corners of the lining were again neatly turned inwards.

Springs and wheels were yellow, the one with black buckles, the other with black bosses. Guard irons and sandpipes were vermilion while the cab roof was white, the cab interior being dark yellow or golden-brown. Coupling rods were vermilion but the bushes were polished as was all unpainted copper and brass. The name, in capital letters, the first slightly larger than the rest, was in gold leaf blocked left in red on sea-green and shaded right in black.

This view of No.2356, ex-*Coulsdon*, at Bognor shed in 1935 shows how the coal rails added under Marsh to increase bunker capacity reduced visibilty to the rear when running in reverse. (Rail Archive Stephenson)



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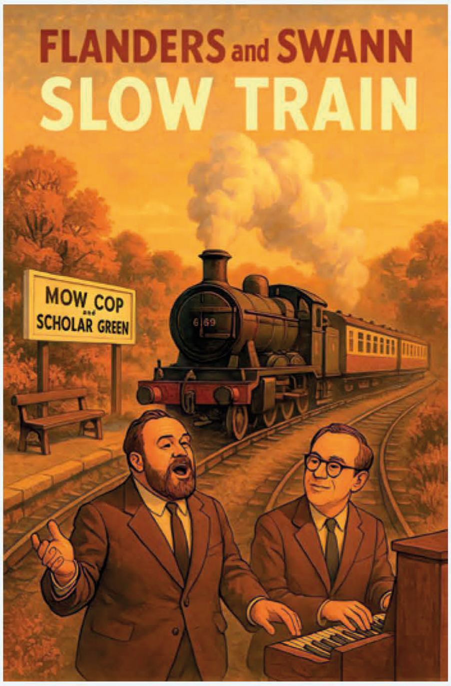


CHEAP MUSIC, CLOSED STAT

RIDING THE SLOW TRAIN

BY JAMES GRAHAM

In the West End hit *Private Lives: An Intimate Comedy in Three Acts,* Noël Coward penned the immortal line "Strange how potent cheap music is." In the light of this observation, the nostalgic tone of a work by British musical comedy duo Flanders and Swann about impending railway closures in the 1960s poignantly laments the closure of rural railway stations across Britain following the Beeching cuts. The author discovers why it has resonated with audiences ever since.

Over 60 years ago, at the start of the 1960s before the decade began to swing, Flanders and Swann – the British musical comedy duo of Michael Flanders (lyricist, vocalist) and Donald Swann (composer, pianist) – first performed an unlikely song, 'Slow Train', at the Haymarket Theatre in London about the impending closure of railway lines and stations which had been doomed by the Beeching cuts. The song was first performed during their revue *At the Drop of Another Hat* on 2nd October 1963. Interestingly, almost a year to the day before, on 5th October 1962, 'Love Me Do', the debut single by the English rock band The Beatles, backed by 'P.S. I Love You', was launched, meaning the 'Fab Four' and Flanders and Swann were contemporaries.

Despite not charting, 'Slow Train' has become one of Flanders and Swann's most enduring and beloved songs. In modern parlance, Flanders and Swann's 'Slow Train' would be described as the soundtrack of an era, a time when change was all too evident on British Railways and the general social and political discussions about the future of railways were growing. Just the day before Flanders and Swann took to the stage, the Leader of the Opposition Harold Wilson MP spoke about the "white heat of technology" in a speech at the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough on 1st October 1963. In this speech, he argued that Britain needed to embrace scientific and technological innovation to modernise its economy and institutions. The famous phrase came in the line: "The Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or for outdated methods."

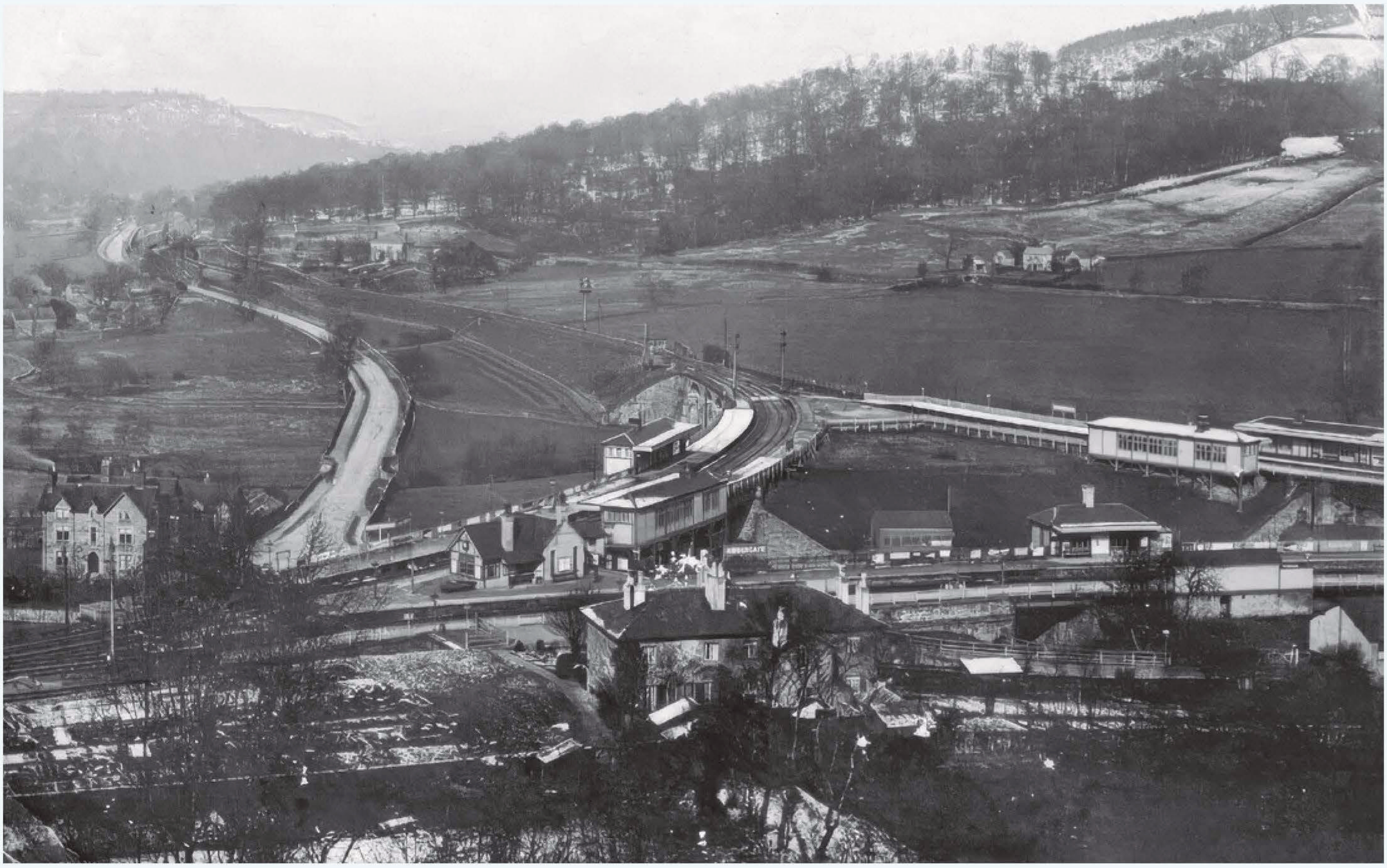
As many eyes were drawn to the future by Wilson, the song writing duo dropped an elegiac lament for the vanishing rural railway stations to be closed during the Beeching cuts in 1960s Britain. With gentle piano accompaniment and wistful lyrics, the song mourns the quiet, human scale of a bygone age. Each verse names now-lost stations – "Millers Dale for Tideswell", "Blandford Forum" and "Mortehoe" – invoking a deep sense of place and the communities they served. There is no anger, only sorrow and quiet resignation, as the song evokes the slow passing of a more personal era of railway travel. Its tempo, measured and reflective, mirrors the very trains it elegises – steady, unhurried, fading into memory. 'Slow Train' stands as a poignant tribute to a disappearing world, resonating with nostalgia and a profound sense of cultural loss.

Flanders and Swann were a distinctive product of post-1945 British entertainment, shaped by the social and cultural transformations of the era. Their work, primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, sits at a confluence of shifting class identities, changing media landscapes and a national grappling with both post-war austerity and a waning empire.

Post-war Britain and social shifts

The years after 1945 saw Britain navigating economic recovery, the welfare state's rise,

Ambergate: a rare triangular station, looking north into the Derwent Valley. Only a single platform remains on the left-hand side to serve the residual Derby–Matlock service.



IONS AND COMEDY GOLD FLANDERS & SWANN

Blandford Forum: the only station on the 'Slow Train' list in Dorset and the first of a pair on the legendary Somerset & Dorset Railway.

decolonisation and growing class mobility. In this context, Flanders and Swann's songs, such as 'The Gasman Cometh' or 'A Song of Patriotic Prejudice', gently lampooned British bureaucracy, national identity and middle-class mores. Their humour was conservative in tone but not reactionary, capturing the spirit of a society in flux without overt radicalism. While both came from elite backgrounds, educated at Westminster School and Oxford, their work often critiqued the very values of the educated middle classes they entertained. This ambivalence reflects a broader post-war questioning of class structures.

The unstoppable rise of satire

The 1950s and '60s were fertile ground for smart, literate humour. Flanders and Swann's brand of witty, musical satire easily fitted into a broader trend from the satire boom. Alongside contemporaries like *Beyond the Fringe* (Alan Bennett, Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller), they helped pioneer a more intellectual form of comedy that contrasted with music hall traditions. They were gentler, though, more aligned with *Punch* than with *Private Eye*. They brought the intimate, intellectually playful style of cabaret into the mainstream through shows like *At the Drop of a Hat* (1956) and *At the Drop of Another Hat* (1963), which played successfully in London and on Broadway.

Meanwhile, the growing numbers able to watch television in their home enjoyed *That Was The Week That Was* (often abbreviated as 'TW3'), a ground-breaking British television satire show which aired on the BBC in 1962 and 1963. Created by Ned Sherrin and hosted by David Frost, it marked a sharp departure from the more genteel and apolitical entertainment that had dominated British TV and radio. It played a key role in the so-called satire boom of the early 1960s and is widely considered a milestone in British broadcasting.

Early 1960s Britain was a time of rising youth culture, greater press freedom and growing disillusionment with deference to authority. The post-war consensus was beginning to show cracks: scandals like the Profumo Affair (1963) and critiques of empire, class and establishment were increasingly voiced.

Performance style

Flanders and Swann's performances were tailored to both live and radio/recorded media, which were undergoing transformation. As the BBC flourished post-war and LP records became household items, their work reached beyond the concert hall. Their recordings enjoyed great popularity, reflecting the shift toward home entertainment.

Although they were not primarily TV performers, their polished, theatrical style was well-suited for the early television era's stage-bound formats. They maintained a timeless, almost Edwardian presence in a decade increasingly dominated by pop culture. Their work often referenced a nostalgic Britishness in whimsical imperial echoes with songs like 'A Transport of Delight' about London buses, or 'Slow Train', reflecting a sentimental attachment to pre-war or fading British institutions – gently critiqued but clearly beloved. Songs like 'The Armadillo' or 'The Hippopotamus Song' might seem light, but they often carry subtle undertones about the human relationship to nature or the absurdity of modern life - resonant themes in an era of social change.

In the cinema a significant work is the 1960 film *The Entertainer*, based on John Osborne's play, in which Laurence Olivier played Archie Rice, a fading music hall performer. The film uses Rice's declining career as a metaphor for the waning British Empire, reflecting the nation's post-war identity crisis and the erosion of traditional values.

Flanders and Swann occupied a unique space in post-1945 British entertainment:

Boarding point
3105

Chorlton-cum-Hardy station closed in 1967 but a new stop on the Manchester Metro was opened on the same site in 2011, with services extended to Manchester Airport in 2014.

nostalgic yet modern, witty but warm, culturally elite but widely popular. They captured the mood of a Britain adjusting to new realities with humour that reassured even as it subtly questioned. Their legacy lies not just in the songs themselves, but in how they reflect the complex, often contradictory currents of mid-twentith century British life.

The song explained

'Slow Train' was written by Swann in F Major, its slow 6/8 rhythm evoking a steam train slowing and finally stopping. The song was written in the wake of the first Beeching report, published in 1963.

The song takes the form of an elegiac list song of railway stations, which has been likened to a litany. The song is introduced by Michael Flanders in the recording of *At the Drop of Another Hat* recorded live at the Haymarket Theatre thus: "Unusual song this for us perhaps, as it's really quite a serious song and it was suggested by all those marvellous old local railway stations with their wonderful evocative names, all due to be axed and done away with one-by-one."

It is an evocation of quiet, rural stations, is highly romanticised and uses imagery such as the presence of a station cat or milk churns on a platform to express a 'less hurried way of life' that is about to vanish. The strength of 'Slow Train' is considered to lie in its list of 'achingly bucolic' names of rural halts. The nostalgically poetic tone of Flanders's lyrics is not unlike to Edward Thomas's 1914 poem *Adlestrop*, which wistfully evokes a fleeting scene of Adlestrop railway station in Gloucestershire.

Although most of the stations mentioned in Flanders's song were earmarked for closure under the Beeching cuts, a number of the stations was ultimately spared closure: Chester-le-Street, Formby, Ambergate and Arram all remain open, while Gorton and Openshaw also survives, now called Gorton. Some stations referred to in the song have since been reopened, notably Chorlton-cum-Hardy. It had closed in January 1967, but reopened in July 2011 as Chorlton tram stop on the Manchester Metro.

Selby and Goole were not threatened by Beeching, though the line "from Selby to Goole" mentioned in the song was closed to passengers. The other line mentioned, "from St. Erth to St. Ives" in Cornwall, stayed open.

Flanders's song treats Formby Four Crosses and Armley Moor Arram as station names, but in both cases he combined two consecutive names from an alphabetical list of stations. Leon Berger, archivist of the estate of Donald Swann, said that Flanders had taken his list from one published in *The Guardian,* which was the source of some of the discrepancies between the names in the songs and the historic names of the stations.

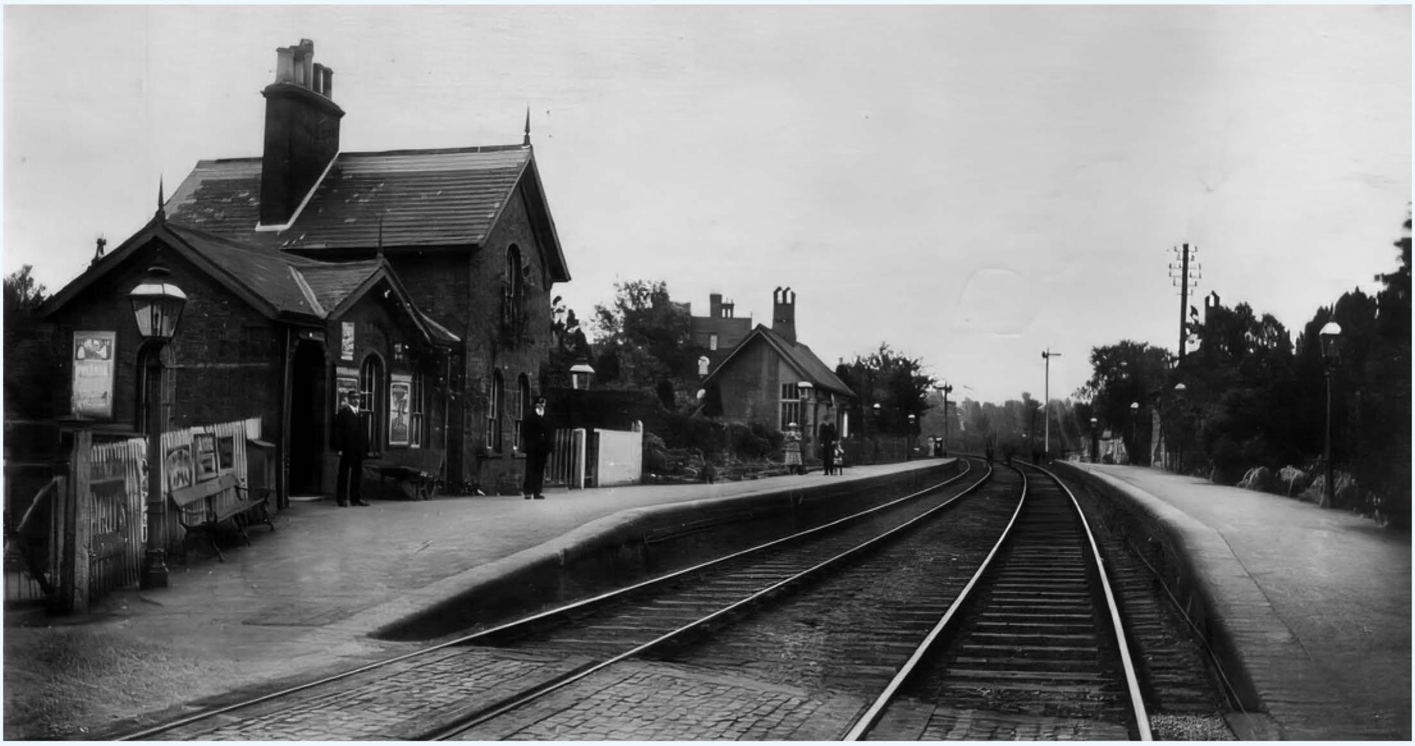
The named stations

The name-checked stations are the length of England, with one station in Wales and none in Scotland. For artistic reasons, some of the names were altered slightly to better fit the song.

Some ten of the stations remain in operation, with five others located on lines that remain open. Trouble House Halt, one of the more especial stops, opened in 1959 just before Dr. Beeching became chairman of British Railways. In 1989 the reopening of the line through Cheslyn Hay included the addition of a new station at Landywood, situated about half a mile south of the original site. Kirby Muxloe, located on the freight-only 'Ivanhoe' line between Leicester and Burton, is frequently suggested for re-opening; however, a 2009 reappraisal by Scott Wilson indicated a low likelihood of reinstating passenger services. Several stations, including Littleton & Badsey, Chittening Platform and Armley Moor, lie on still-active rail lines. Chittening and Armley Moor, in the urban areas of Bristol and Leeds respectively, have been proposed for reopening as part of efforts to enhance local rail connectivity.

British Railways (London Midland Region)

Millers Dale was opened by the Midland Railway in 1863, the station is name-checked in the song as Millers Dale for Tideswell. It was once a key stop on the Midland Railway's route through Derbyshire, serving passengers and goods in the Peak District. Opened in 1863, it closed in 1967 and now forms part of the Monsal Trail walking route.



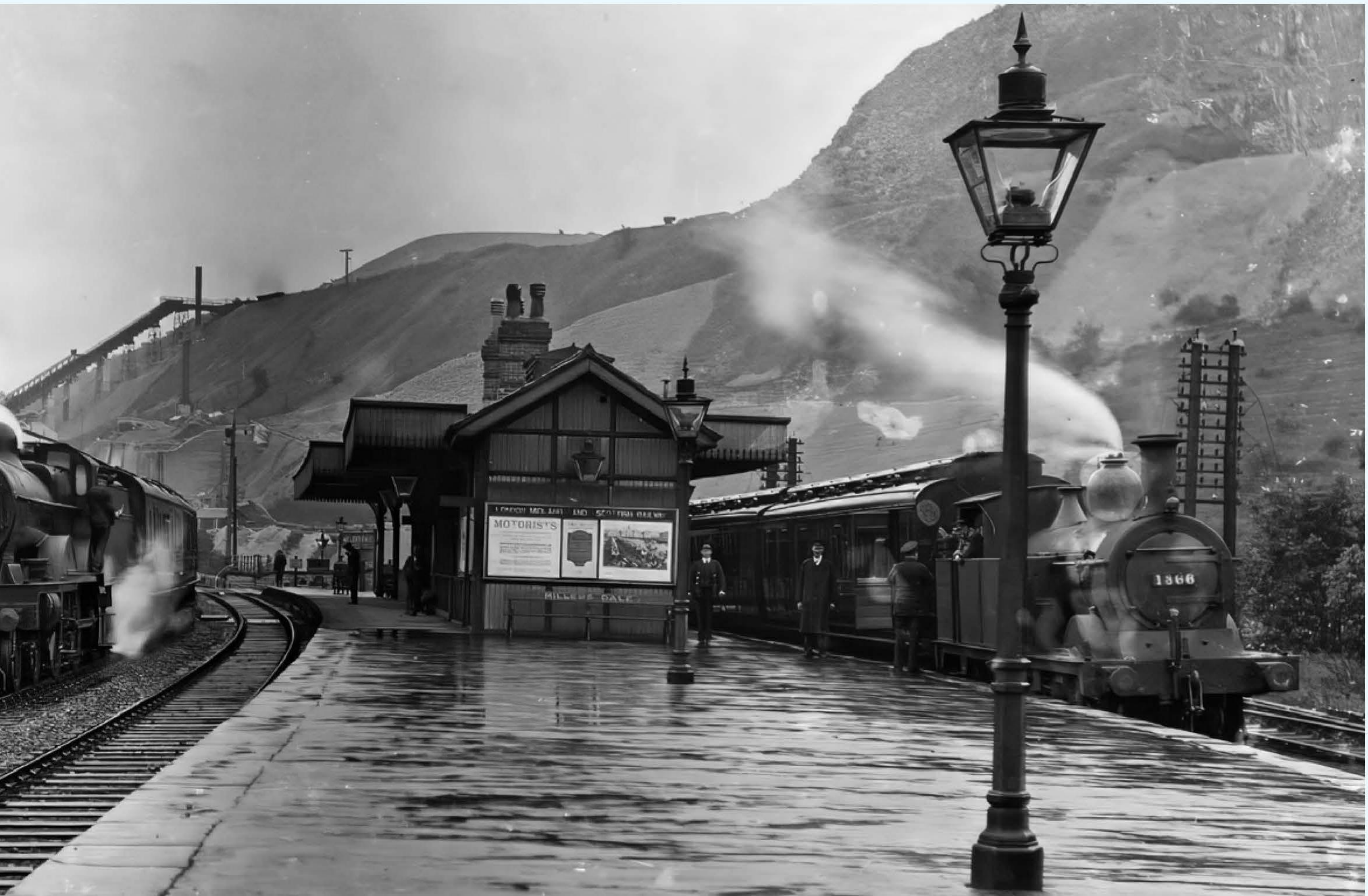
The Midland Railway opened the Burton-on-Trent–Leicester line through Kirby Muxloe in 1849: it closed in 1964..

Kirby Muxloe station, located in Leicestershire, opened in 1870 on the Leicester & Swannington Railway. It primarily served the small village of Kirby Muxloe but saw limited use. The station closed to passengers in 1928 and to goods in 1964. Today, little trace of it remains.

The delightfully named Mow Cop and Scholar Green was a station on the North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) between Stoke-on-Trent and Congleton. It served the village of Mow Cop. The line was opened by the NSR on 9th October 1848 but the station at Mow Cop did not open until the beginning of January 1849. It closed in 1964.

Chorlton-cum-Hardy railway station opened on 1st January 1880 by the Midland Railway on the Manchester South District Railway. It later became Cheshire Lines Committee and closed on 2nd January 1967 as part of the Beeching Axe, though the line through Fallowfield remained open to freight until the 1980s. In the song there are: “No churns, no porter, no cat on a seat/At Chorlton-cum-Hardy or Chester-le-Street.”

Formby railway station is Merseyside, on the Southport branch of the Merseyrail network’s Northern Line. The Beeching Report listed Formby as a station to be



Miller’s Dale c1930, with MR Compound 4-4-0 No.1020 on a down stopping train and ‘1823’ 0-4-4T No.1368 on the Buxton local connection. The station was styled Miller’s Dale for Tideswell from 1889 to 1965. It closed in 1967 but trains continued to pass through until 1968 when the line was closed. The site is now used as a car park for the Monsal Trail, which follows the trackbed. (Pendragon Collection) closed, along with the entire Liverpool to Southport route, which never happened. In 1978 the station became part of the Merseyrail network's Northern Line (operated by British Rail until privatised in 1995).

The only Welsh station in the song, Four Crosses was a station on the former Cambrian Railways between Oswestry and Welshpool. Opened in 1860 as part of the Oswestry & Newtown Railway, it served the village of Four Crosses in Powys, Wales. In 1963 the former Cambrian main line was vested to the London Midland Region of British Railways, which decided to keep the parallel former Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway open. The line from Welshpool to Oswestry was hence closed in 1965, including Four Crosses station.

Ambergate station serves the village of that name in Derbyshire. It is located on the Derwent Valley Line, which connects Derby and Matlock; it diverges from the Midland Main Line just south of the station at Ambergate Junction. The station is owned by Network Rail and managed by East Midlands Railway.

That is so straightforward compared with the complicated history of the station. The original station was built for the North Midland Railway in 1840, between Derby and Leeds. It was an ornate building, designed by Francis Thompson. From Belper the line followed the Derwent Valley, crossing four bridges and passing through Longlands Tunnel. It reached Hag Wood Tunnel, then Ambergate. A station was built, later rebuilt in 1863. Lines extended to Rowsley (1849), New Mills (1867) and Pye Bridge (1875), primarily for coal traffic. In 1876 a loop bypassed Hag Wood Tunnel to a third platform, prompting a full station rebuild. By 1922 ticket sales rose to 90,157. In 1931 the Broadholme approach was quadrupled, Longlands Tunnel removed and a new bridge built. The line carried express and coal trains.

All that is left now is one platform on a single track to Matlock; the original main Derby to Sheffield line passes to the east through Hag Wood (Toadmoor) Tunnel and onwards to Clay Cross and Chesterfield. The original listing of Ambergate station for closure under the Beeching Axe led to its mention in 'Slow Train'.

Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay railway station served the villages of Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay in Staffordshire between 1858 and 1965. It was opened by the South Staffordshire Railway (SSR) on 1st February 1858 and was originally named Wyrley and Church Bridge. It was situated on SSR line between Walsall and Rugeley Town and closed on 18th January 1965.

Cockermouth railway station in Cumbria was the western terminus of the Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway. The station opened to passenger traffic on 2nd January 1865 and closed on 18th April 1966. The station was the second to be built in the town but all traces of it are now gone. In the song the station name is cited as Cockermouth for Buttermere.

British Railways (Western Region)

Perhaps one of the better known stations to fall under the axe, Blandford Forum station served the town of Blandford Forum in Dorset. It was a stop on the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, which connected Bath with Bournemouth. The station remained open until 7th March 1966, when the entire line from Bath to Bournemouth closed to passengers. Goods traffic continued for a further three years, but the station was finally fully closed in 1969 and the track was lifted.

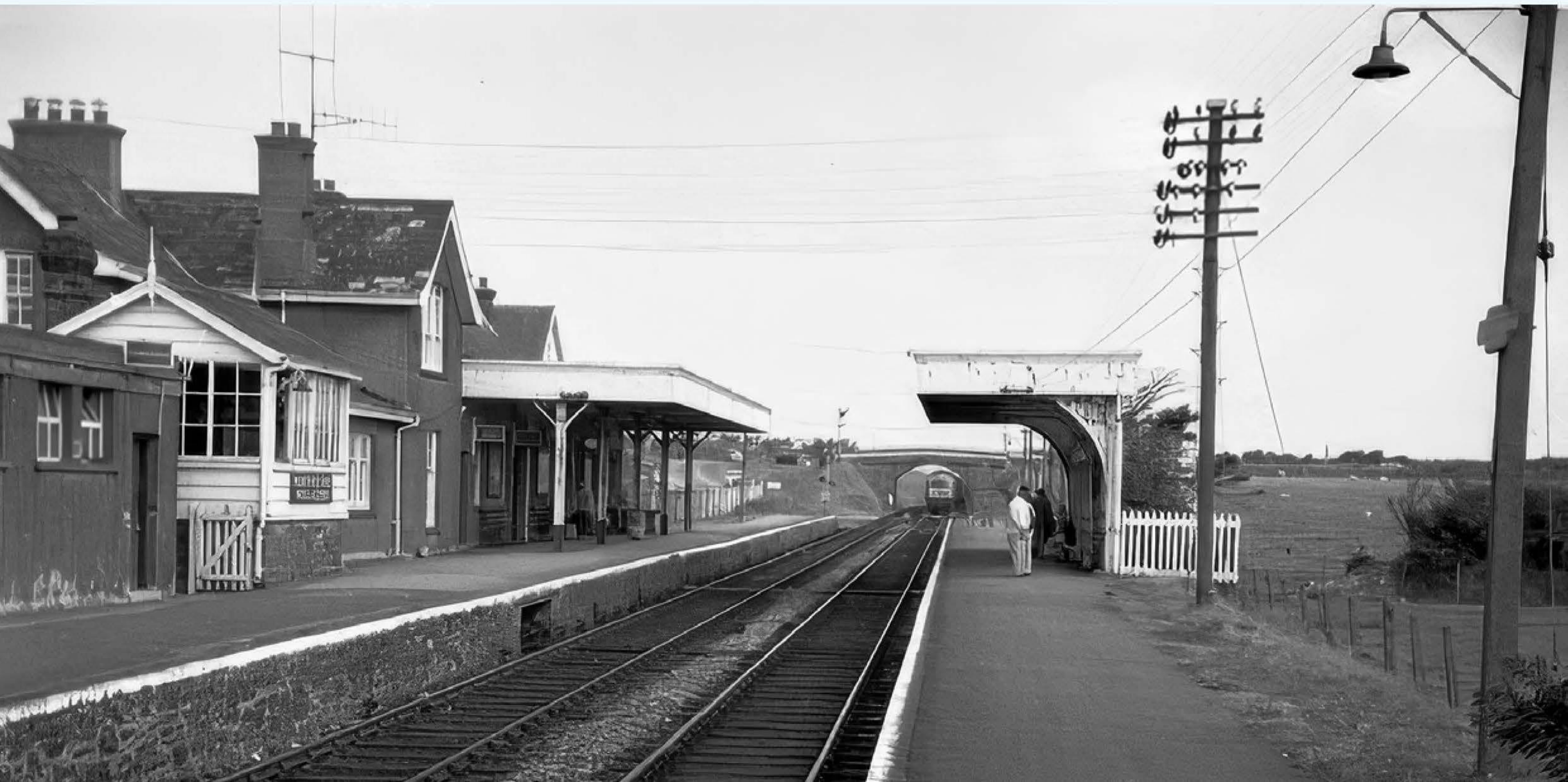
Midsomer Norton (originally Midsomer Norton, later Midsomer Norton and Welton and finally Midsomer Norton South) was a station on the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway between Bath Green Park and Shepton Mallet. It served the town of Midsomer Norton in the county of Somerset, which was also served by a second station known as Midsomer Norton and Welton on the Bristol & North Somerset Railway

The station was sold in 1969 to a local school and then in 1995 to the Wansdyke District Council, which leased it to the Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust to restore to its 1950s condition. Today the trust runs an operational railway centre and museum at the site and is relaying the 2 miles 2 chains (3.3km) of track southwards up the gradient towards Chilcompton. The plan is to eventually operate a ride-round trip over the route, which would require restoration of the former Chilcompton Tunnel.

Windmill End was a station on the former Great Western Railway's Bumble Hole Line between Blowers Green and Old Hill. It opened in 1878, was destaffed in 1952 and closed in 1964. The site of the railway and the station had been obliterated by the end of the 1970s. It has now been largely reclaimed by nature.

Trouble House Halt in Gloucestershire stands out in the song for a range of reasons. Firstly, it was a halt not a station, it exclusively served a public house and was in service for just five years before the Beeching axe dried up passenger activity. Secondly, it was also the only location that existed entirely under British Railways throughout its active role as a railway halt.

The halt was on the branch line between Kemble and Tetbury between 1959 and 1964, when the line closed as part of the Beeching cuts. Diesel railbus services were introduced by British Railways Western Region on the Tetbury branch line on 2nd February 1959 and on the same day two halts were opened on that line, at Church's Hill and at Trouble House. It was built to serve a seventeenth century public house, the Trouble House Inn, which had originally been called the Waggon and Horses. It was the only station in England built specifically to serve a pub, although Berney Arms station in Norfolk has much the same function. The halt itself



Mortehoe and Woolacombe survived Dr. Beeching but closed in 1970. After lying semi-derelict for many years, in the early 1990s the station was used as the basis for a children's theme park called' Once Upon a Time'. Four redundant British Railways MkI coaches were craned into position between the platforms, and a number of ex-BR four-wheel vans (mostly 12-ton 'Vanwide' type) were located around the grounds.

St Erth
St Erth
St Erth

consisted only of a wooden platform and was known locally as 'Beercrate Halt'. Late-night travellers had to flag down a train by showing a lighted match. The line and station were closed on 6th April 1964.

On the final day of operation, when the last passenger train from Tetbury arrived at Trouble House Halt, a coffin was loaded on to the train by bowler-hatted mourners. It had been made by the landlord of the pub together with his brother, covered with inscriptions and filled with empty whisky bottles. On arrival at Kemble, the coffin was transferred to a train for Paddington, addressed to Richard Beeching. The last passenger train to Tetbury found its approach to Trouble House Halt blocked by burning hay bales. As of May 2025 the public house was still open.

Audlem railway station was on the former Great Western Railway between Market Drayton and Nantwich, opened in 1863. It served the village of Audlem in Cheshire until closure in 1963. The station was built by the Nantwich & Market Drayton Railway (N&MDR) and opened on 20th October 1863, although the line was operated by the Great Western Railway from its opening. The N&MDR eventually amalgamated with the Great Western Railway in 1897. It was closed to passengers by the British Railways Board on 9th September 1963.

Chittening Platform railway station was on the former Great Western Railway between Filton and Avonmouth. It was opened on 5th March 1917 to serve a large Government munitions factory at Chittening. The factory project was abandoned when the United States entered the First World War, but the station remained open to serve employees at the Chittening Trading Estate until 1923. It was reopened unadvertised for workers on 27th October 1941 and opened to the public fully on 31st May 1948. It closed on 23rd November 1964 when passenger traffic ceased on the Avonmouth and Filton line.

St. Erth railway station is a Grade II listed station situated at Rose-an-Grouse in Cornwall. It serves the nearby village of St. Erth, which is about 0.75 miles (1.21 km) away and is the junction for the St. Ives Bay line to St Ives. The station is 320 miles 78 chains from the zero point at London Paddington measured via Box and Plymouth Millbay. On an average weekday St. Erth sees up to 69 trains, 26 trains to St. Ives, 22 towards Penzance and 21 towards Plymouth. This makes it the busiest station in Cornwall in terms of services.

Opened in 1877, St. Ives railway station remains open to serve the coastal town of St. Ives, Cornwall. It was the terminus of the last new broad gauge passenger railway to be constructed in the country. Converted to standard gauge in 1892, it is today served by Great Western Railway services on the St. Ives Bay Line from St. Erth.

Littleton and Badsey was a station on the Great Western Railway's Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton line, near the town of Evesham, Worcestershire. It was located in Blackminster and served the villages of Badsey and the Littletons (North and Middle Littleton and South Littleton). The station was opened by the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway on 21st April 1884. The 1963 report *The Reshaping of British Railways* listed the station for closure and British Railways closed it on 3rd January 1966. It was written as Littleton Badsey in the song.

British Railways (Southern Region)

The only station included on the Southern Region, Mortehoe and Woolacombe, was on the London & South Western Railway Ilfracombe branch line between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe in North Devon. It was known as Morthoe until 13th May 1902. The station was the location of eminent railway photographer Ivo Peters's first steam train photograph in 1925.

St. Ives station, 320 miles from Paddington, and the branch to St. Ives remain open having survived the Beeching Report.

British Railways (Eastern Region)

Mumby Road was a station on the Great Northern Railway's Mablethorpe loop line between Willoughby, Mablethorpe and Louth. It served the village of Bilsby and was named after the nearby village of Mumby. It opened in 1886 and closed in 1970.

Chester-le-Street remains a railway station on the East Coast Main Line, which runs between London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley. The station is situated 8 miles 24 chains south of Newcastle, serving the market town of Chester-le-Street in County Durham. It is owned by Network Rail and managed by Northern Trains.

Long Stanton railway station was on the Great Eastern Railway, between Cambridge and Huntingdon. It served the villages of Longstanton and Willingham (being roughly midway between them) until closure in October 1970. The railway line through Long Stanton remained open for freight trains from Cambridge to St. Ives, Cambridgeshire, until 1992. The track was removed and one platform demolished in 2007, due to construction of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.

Since August 2011 the line to St. Ives has formed the route of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. The station building and the station master's house are now a private residence named 'Gresley House' - a reference to Sir Nigel Gresley, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Northern Railway and then the London & North Eastern Railway, responsible for such iconic locomotives as *Flying Scotsman* and *Mallard*.

Dunstable Town, also known as Dunstable Church Street, was a station on the Great Northern Railway's branch line from Welwyn which served Dunstable in Bedfordshire from 1858 to 1965. Against a background of falling passenger numbers and declining freight returns, the station closed to goods in 1964 and to passengers in 1965, a casualty of the Beeching Axe. The station site is now in use as part of the Luton to Dunstable Busway.

Dogdyke was on the former Great Northern Railway between Boston and Lincoln. The station, and essentially the hamlet of Dogdyke itself, served a transhipment point at the confluence of the Rivers Bain and Witham until closure in 1963.

Tumby Woodside was a station in Tumby Woodside, Lincolnshire, on the Kirkstead and Little Steeping line which ran between Lincoln and Firsby. The site is now left in an overgrown and unkempt state. The station master's house survives as a private residence, having served the village until closure in 1970.

Pye Hill and Somercotes station was on the Great Northern Railway's Derbyshire Extension on the branch between Kimberley and Pinxton. It was opened on 24th March 1877 and was originally named Pye Hill; it was renamed Pye Hill and Somercotes on 8th January 1906 and closed on 7th January 1963.

Armley Moor station was on the former Great Northern Railway between Leeds and Bramley. The location was between Carr Crofts and Wortley Road bridges, accessed via Station Road. It served the Leeds suburb of Armley in West Yorkshire until closure in July 1966 due to the Beeching Axe. Trains still pass the site on what is now known as the Caldervale Line, but all the structures, platforms and buildings have been demolished.

Arram railway station serves the small village of Arram in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It is still in operation and located on the Yorkshire Coast line. It is operated by Northern which provides all passenger train services. It was opened by the York & North Midland Railway in 1853. The station house is privately owned.

Selby, a Grade II listed station, is open and serves the market town of Selby in North Yorkshire. The area around the station is a junction for a number of lines, including the former East Coast Main Line route between Doncaster and York, the Selby to Driffield line (1848) and the Selby to Goole line (1910). After 1983, with the opening of the Selby Diversion, Selby is no longer on the East Coast Main Line.

Goole is a railway station serving the port town of Goole on the Hull and Doncaster branch in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The current station was opened by the North Eastern Railway on 1st October 1869 (along with its line from Thorne Junction to Gilberdyke). Passenger trains from the Knottingley direction initially ran to a terminus station next to the docks but this was closed when the NER station opened, trains then using a short curve to join the main line at Potter's Grange Junction 440 yards south of the new station. The former Lancashire & Yorkshire line into the docks remained a busy freight route for many years afterwards, but has now been lifted (though access to the remaining dock sidings is still possible from the main line).

Gorton and Openshaw railway station serves the Gorton district of the city of Manchester, sited 2½ miles east of Manchester Piccadilly. It is a stop on the Glossop and Hope Valley lines; Northern Trains operate all services that stop here and also manage the station. The station was opened by the Great Central Railway (GCR) on 25th August 1906 and was referred to as Openshaw in the 1964 song.

The song's afterlife

As a mark of its longevity, the 2min 38sec song was written over 61 years ago yet is still available on YouTube. Around the turn of the century, Canadian classical quartet Quartetto Gelato released a themed album called 'Quartetto Gelato Travels the Orient Express', celebrating the original journey of 'Orient Express' and featuring music from London to Istanbul. The album begins with a rendition of 'Slow Train', with the final lines changed to reflect the route of the 'Orient Express'.

A version of 'The Slow Train' by the King's Singers is on electronica duo Lemon Jelly's track '76 aka The Slow Train', combined with a cover of the Albert Hammond song 'I'm a Train' also performed by the King's Singers. A live version by Stackridge was included in its 2009 DVD 4x4.½

Michael Williams's book *On the Slow Train* takes its name from the song. It celebrates twelve of the most beautiful and historic journeys in Britain that were saved from the Beeching cuts, including famous routes such as the Settle–Carlisle line and less well-known pleasures, such as the four-hour Lancaster–Carlisle route along the remote Cumbrian coastline. English folk singer-songwriter Frank Turner included a version of the song on his 2011 compilation album 'The Second Three Years'.

The rest of their lives

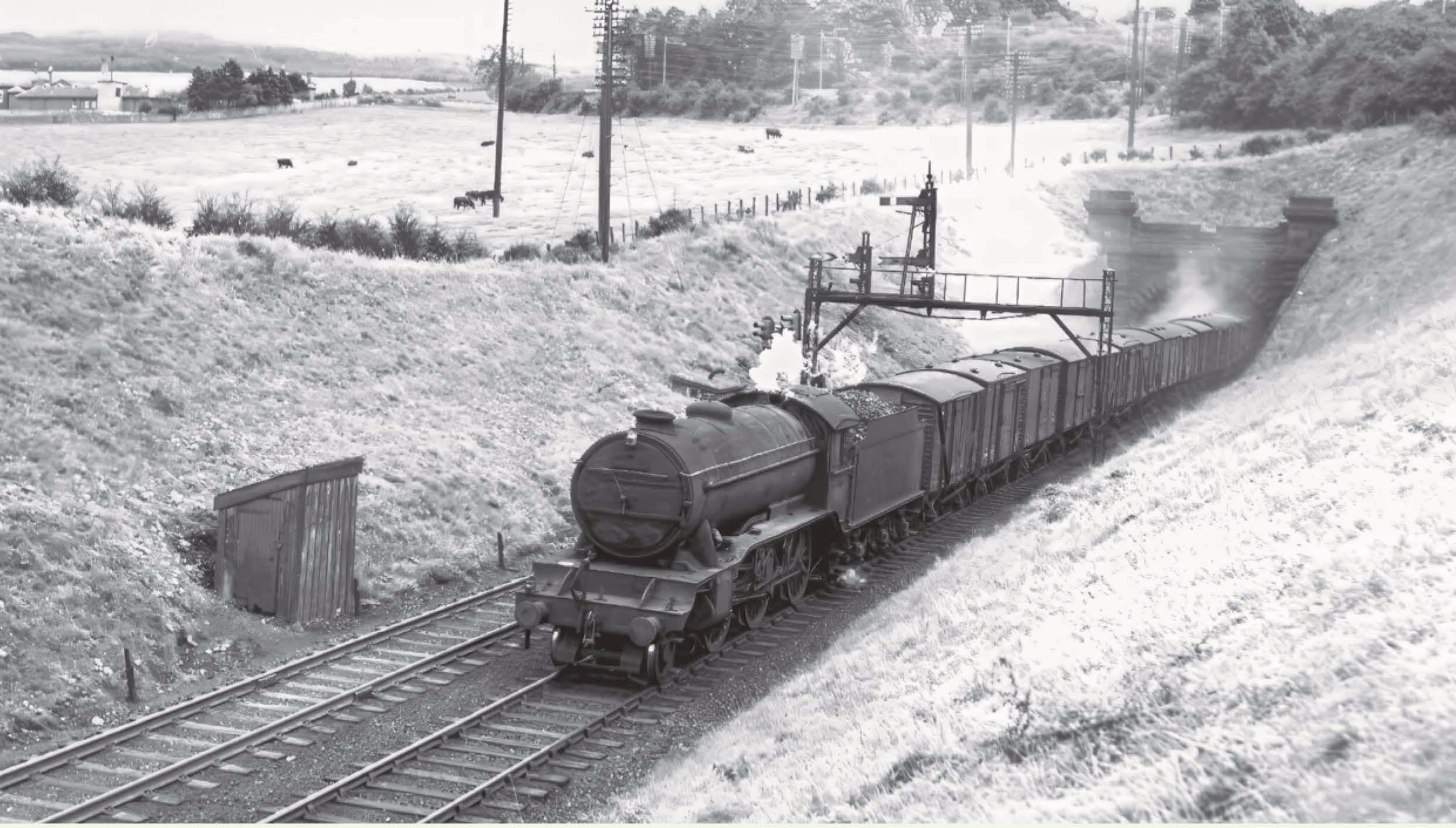
After the release of 'Slow Train' in 1964, the career of Flanders and Swann entered its final chapter. Following the success of their revue *At the Drop of Another Hat,* which premiered in 1963 and included 'Slow Train' in its programme, the duo continued performing together for several more years. They toured internationally and remained staples of British entertainment. However, by 1967, they had mutually decided to end their formal collaboration. The split was not caused by artistic disagreements or personal conflict; rather, it stemmed from a natural winding down of their shared creative period. Both men felt it was time to pursue other interests – Swann was eager to explore broader musical projects and Flanders, whose health was declining, was increasingly restricted in his ability to travel and perform.

Flanders had contracted polio during World War II, leaving him permanently wheelchair-bound. Despite this, he maintained an active career in performance and writing well into the 1970s. Sadly, his health continued to deteriorate and he died prematurely in 1975 at the age of 53 from a ruptured aneurysm while on holiday in Wales. Swann lived considerably longer, continuing to compose and perform well into the 1980s and early 1990s. He explored classical composition, religious music and even musical settings of Tolkien's poetry. Swann died in 1994 at the age of 70, after a battle with cancer.

Though their partnership ended decades before their deaths, Flanders and Swann remained friends and both carried a deep respect for the other's talent. Their legacy endures through their unique body of work – a blend of highbrow humour, wordplay, social satire and genuine musicality. Today their work is still celebrated in revues, tribute performances and radio broadcasts, a testament to a duo whose songs continue to speak to the soul as much as they tickle the intellect.

Mine's a pint! The Trouble House Inn, on the Tetbury branch, predated and outlasted the halt established to serve it. The Halt itself consisted only of a wooden platform and was known locally as 'Beercrate Halt. Late-night travellers had to flag down a train by showing a lighted match.

The Trouble House



A northbound fitted freight service leaves Moncrieff Tunnel and heads for Perth behind K32-6-0 No.61879 on 4th September 1954. (W. A. C. Smith courtesy The Transport Treasury)

THOMAS HERD

The experiences of a Caledonian Railway track worker recounted by

ALISTAIR F. NISBET

Occasionally railway publications have carried articles relating to a railwayman's career; mostly these have been about a driver or a fireman's experiences over the years and, less frequently, a signalman's experiences. I cannot, however, recall seeing anything about somebody who spent the whole of his working life on the track but have come across a series of articles which were published in *The Weekly News Railway Supplement* during the late 1890s. This included the reminiscences of a platelayer (or surfaceman as he would have been known in later years). In those days lines were not normally closed for any length of time, work on the track was simply fitted in where it could be accommodated. There certainly was no question of providing the dreaded rail replacement bus for passengers.

Likewise there was no requirement to hold a Personal Track Safety Certificate nor to wear high visibility clothing, not even a hard hat. Instead workers were trusted to employ common sense while out and about on the track, especially to keep out of the way of oncoming trains. This, of course, did not mean there were no injuries or fatalities, for the Board of Trade annual reports of accidents which had been investigated by the Railway Inspectorate are full of such incidents.

The subject of these reminiscences was one Thomas Herd who was interviewed at his home some years after he had retired from the service of the Caledonian Railway. He lived about 500 yards from the mouth of Moncrieff Tunnel on the southern outskirts of Perth and his 'length' included said tunnel where he had been the permanent way foreman for many years. The northern approach to the tunnel lies in a deep cutting while to the south is the open country of Strathearn and Hilton Junction where the North British Railway's main line from the Forth Bridge merged with the Caledonian's route from Stirling and the south.

When asked whether he had ever experienced any strange events while working in the tunnel, he did admit to a wide variety of experiences but said they were "just in the line of daily work" for he had soon become accustomed to being under the ground so much. His hearing had been so acute that he could detect a train while it was still some miles distant and could calculate to a minute when it was time to clear out of the way. By the time of his interview, however, he admitted to having become quite deaf and would no longer have been able to safely judge the progress of a train.

On a normal working day there had been about 140 trains passing in both directions and

Hilton Junction from the brake van of a goods service heading south on to the former NBR line to Bridge of Earn and Newburgh on 6th July 1957. The Caledonian Railway line goes off to the left for Forgandenny and Stirling.
(A. E. Bennett courtesy of The Transport Treasury)

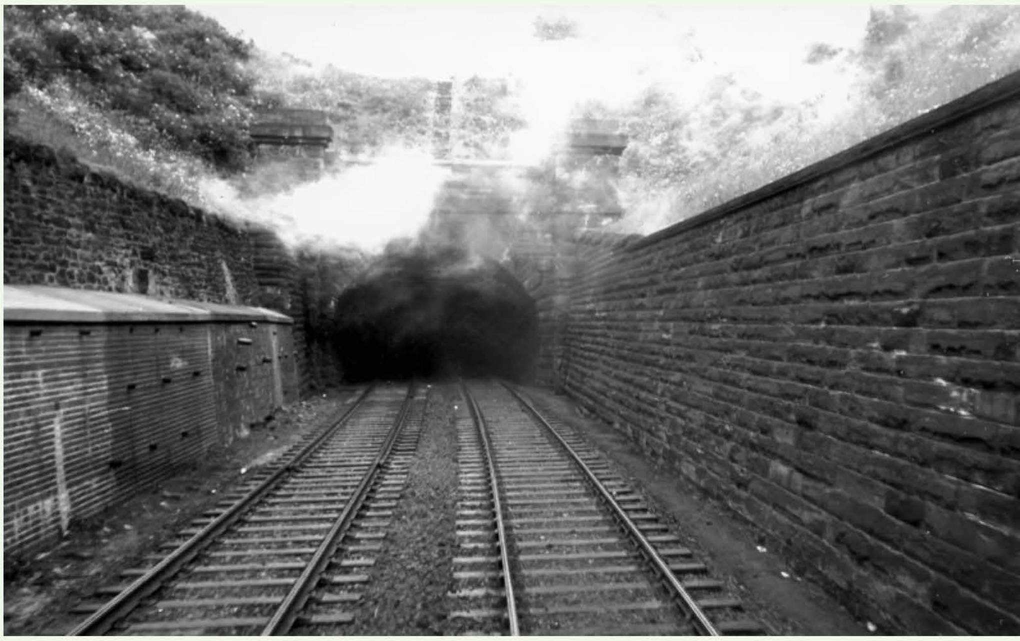
he had, of necessity, known all the times in the monthly edition of the Working Timetable. As time went on he had not only been able to detect the approach of a train but to distinguish the different trains by the sounds they made while passing through the tunnel, though he did not mention any examples.

Thomas Herd had worked on the railway for 48 years altogether, having started as a navvy building the Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway and then doing likewise on the Scottish Central at Blackford (from where Highland Spring bottled water is now despatch by rail to Daventry). After this line opened to traffic in 1848 he had moved to Perth as a platelayer on the section from Perth General station to the tunnel entrance, soon after being offered the position of foreman in the 'tunnel gang'. Although he had accepted the promotion, the tunnel work did not initially appeal to him nor did it for some years. At that time there were only three men in the tunnel gang but with the introduction of heavier rails a fourth member was employed. Thomas described the tunnel as being "a gruesome place", the walls and roof all being black with soot and, as the ground was almost level, the drainage ditches on either side were barely adequate, there being almost no 'flow' so there was always plenty of stagnant water everywhere.

Apparently there had been wells of good quality drinking water in places but at track level the surface of the water usually had to be cleared of accumulated soot before one could dip a can into it. One well was known as the Minister's Well, the name having come about during the construction of the tunnel when a tremendous rush of water had poured onto the navvies cutting through the rock. When the source was investigated it was found that the well for the Manse at Craigend had been so deep that it was in the direct line of the railway and the workmen had cut through its bottom and drained it completely, leaving the minister and his family without a water supply. The railway company were therefore bound to provide an alternative supply for the Manse and various other houses in the vicinity.

Sometimes it could seem like pandemonium in the tunnel according to Mr. Herd – when they were working the rows of lamps would shed a ghostly light on the rails while the clanging of hammers together with the rumbling when sleepers "were tumbled out of the wagons" would make a deafening din which would reverberate around the enclosed space of the tunnel. Taking into account the grimy faces of the men it could seem like a visit to "the nether regions", the common euphemism of the time for Hell.

There were four chimneys or smoke vents in the tunnel roof and these would allow a small circle of daylight to reach the tunnel floor – away from the entrances these were the only form of illumination within the whole tunnel. In winter, however, the low sun could shine through the southern portal and create a picturesque scene and no doubt it still does today for drivers of southbound trains. It was a different matter when the wind was blowing strongly from the south for it could blow out the flames in the oil lamps which were all the track gang had to see by. Normally the temperature in the tunnel is warm all year round but when it was intensely cold outside the effect could be felt even within the structure. In these conditions the stagnant water could ice over, making it very dangerous while walking through the tunnel.


The southern portal of Moncrieff Tunnel as seen from the brake van of a southbound goods service on 6th July 1957. (A. E. Bennett courtesy of The Transport Treasury)

It might seem difficult to credit that somebody could accidentally stray on to the railway and into the tunnel but according to Thomas Herd no end of people did do so, especially during the night time. On one occasion around the time of the Crimean War the tunnel gang heard footsteps approaching from the north and and soon realised it was not a railwayman for they knew and could tell the difference between all their fellow workers and railway officials. They took their lanterns and went to see who was there – it turned out to be a man stumbling amongst the rails and sleepers and wearing a coat that looked like it might be covered in blood. On closer inspection they saw he was actually a soldier in uniform – at this time the British army still wore the traditional bright red jackets. His story was that his regiment was under orders to be deployed to the Crimea and he was trying to make his way to Glasgow to say farewell to his parents in case he was struck down in the War. He had been refused permission to leave his regiment so had decided to go AWOL but he was turned back by the permanent way workers and put on the highway for his own safety.

On another occasion the skipper of a ship which was moored in Perth Harbour managed to lose his way and wandered into the tunnel but when he was found he had no idea how he had reached there – probably with the assistance of 'strong drink' if the truth be known. The tunnel gang took pity on the poor chap and conducted him all the way back to his vessel where he wanted his rescuers to join him in his cabin but, being mindful that they were still supposed to be working, they declined with thanks and returned to their place of duty.

Mr. Herd also related how, during another night shift, he became aware of a moaning as of someone in dire distress and, on hastening to where the noise was coming from, discovered a man lying beside the track with his head and shoulders over the outer rail. As a train was approaching the foreman dragged him away just in the nick of time and prevented the stranger "being cut in two". It seems that the unfortunate man had fallen down the steep embankment from a considerable height, though what he was doing there did not come out then. With great difficulty the workmen managed to carry him to a place of safety from where he was taken to Perth Royal Infirmary but their efforts had been in vain for he died of his injuries three days later.

Many things were thrown out of the window by passengers as trains passed through the tunnel, this being "a convenient way of disposing of useless or troublesome articles". This was, of course, a very dangerous practice for those working within the tunnel could well have been struck by some such missile, possibly with very serious consequences. Fortunately none of those working there had been injured in this way according to Thomas Herd but they quite frequently came across empty whisky bottles or purses, the latter likely to have been stolen. Only once was a purse found with anything in it, this being a half sovereign although one of the more unusual things to turn up was a bundle of clothing which proved to be a soldier's uniform, thought to be that of a deserter.

Not everything went smoothly all the time, of course, for the pages of railway history, particularly in the nineteenth century, are littered with incidents and accidents and Thomas said he had witnessed one himself although at a distance, this being outside the tunnel itself on 1st January 1870 at Forgandenny station which was located between Hilton Junction and Forteviot. The gang had been cleaning soot from the tunnel roof, a task which could only be undertaken at night when traffic was much reduced and it was just before midnight when they completed their work. Having cleared away their ladders they had gone outside for some fresh air while they waited for the mail train to pass and looking towards Forgandenny they could see the outline of a long train.

Here Mr. Herd's memory of an event which occurred getting on for 30 years previously seems to be a little bit at odds with what had actually happened insofar as the details were concerned. He was convinced that this was an excursion train but in fact it was the 6.20pm from Glasgow which normally combined with the 6.00pm from Edinburgh at Larbert. However, because the Glasgow portion was running behind time, the Edinburgh carriages were sent on ahead but apparently without the then mandatory green tail light to show a second portion was following. According to *The Scotsman* the 'pointsman' who had been left in charge at Forgandenny was not aware that there were two separate trains that night, assuming that in the absence of the crucial green lamp, the whole train had been combined as normal. After it left he therefore set his signals to clear and went home to bed.

The Glasgow train appeared eventually and stopped at Forgandenny to let passengers off and, while the guard was attempting to re-couple two vehicles where the coupling had broken, the down Mail came up and ran into the rear of the Glasgow train. Herd and his gang had seen that the Mail was travelling at its normal speed and he exclaimed to the others that there would be a collision. His words were hardly out of his mouth when they heard the terrible sounds of the two trains colliding. They therefore grabbed their handlamps and ran towards the scene of the wreck where they found that some of the Glasgow carriages had been telescoped into each other and "tumbled about in sublime confusion". The centre vehicles had "been reduced to matchwood", a frequent newspaper description of the era, and soon after they reached the site they were joined by other rescuers from Perth and elsewhere. Afterwards they said they had found the rescue work very harrowing.

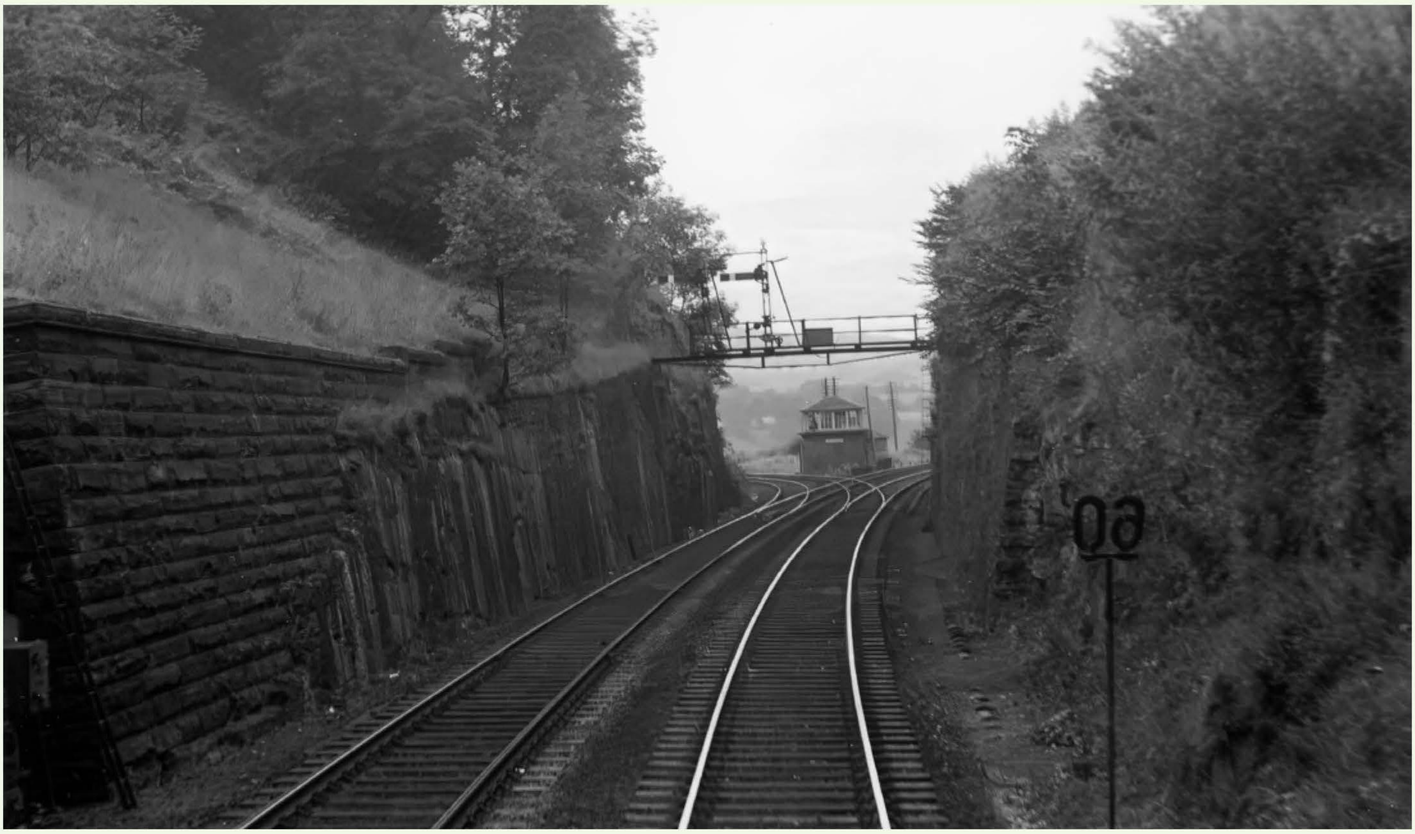
One particular couple whom the tunnel team rescued was sitting upright in the wreckage, being jammed in their places by a timber beam. They said they could feel no pain and appeared not to have been injured but were unable to extricate themselves. Another person found an axe and was able to cut through the timber so they could be freed and immediately their blood began to circulate and they felt excruciating pain and had to be assisted by a doctor. The couple was very fortunate in that they made a full recovery and according to Mr. Herd was still living in Perth.

Another accident which Thomas related to the newspaper man occurred in the tunnel and involved a goods train which had come to a halt and which the driver was unable to restart. All his efforts to get moving again had left the tunnel so filled with smoke and steam that neither the signalman at Hilton Junction nor his counterpart at the north end had realised that the goods was still stuck inside the tunnel; Hilton Junction had therefore cleared the road for the Down Mail with the inevitable result – the brake van and wagons were piled up to the tunnel roof. The crew of the Mail were relatively lucky in that they were only slightly injured despite being thrown from their footplate by the force of the collision. Only one passenger, a minister, received slight injuries but the most serious injury was to a cow which was found lying jammed across the coupling between two wagons. To warn the signalman at the other end of the tunnel Mr. Herd had to clamber over the wreckage while another member of the gang went to the nearer cabin.

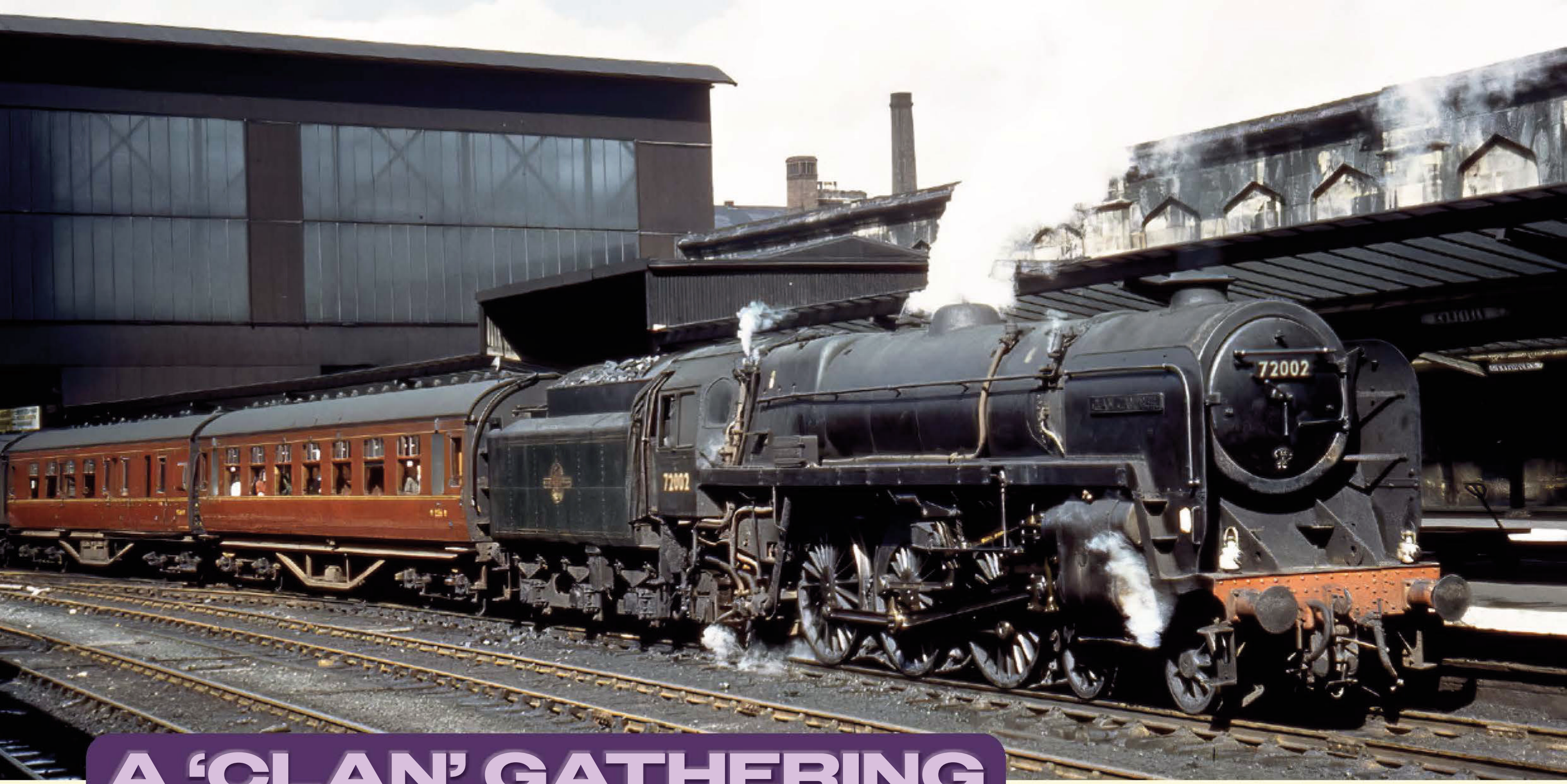
I mentioned at the start of this essay how dangerous trackwork can be and our foreman was not immune from being involved in dangerous situations. On one occasion he had been closely examining a wooden sleeper, being aware that a train had just passed on the up line. He said he was so intent on his examination that he completely forgot that another was due on the down line and, on hearing a whistle jumped backwards but his foot became caught while doing so and a projection on the engine "tore one of his knees". However, this was not sufficiently bad as "…to render him unfit for duty". They were obviously very tough and resilient in those days and he was, of course, very fortunate not to have been a fatality.

Herd was not always so lucky, though, for another incident saw him run over by an engine. This came when the gang had been working most of the night, assisting in clearing a derailment at the south end of the tunnel. About daybreak the Perth men were allowed to go home and as the foreman began to walk through the smoke-filled tunnel a very slow-moving engine loomed up right in front of him and he was knocked down, fortunately between the two rails. Nevertheless he received injuries to his legs and a cut to his head, these being sufficiently severe as to cause him to have three weeks off work. Whether he would have received any pay for such an industrial injury is unclear but he may not have as he was actually walking on the tracks at the time.

When Thomas Herd retired in December 1892 his fellow workers presented him with a purse full of sovereigns (something of a tradition at this time) and a copy of a book about Central Africa by Professor Henry Drummond, the presentation being made by Mr. Barr, the Caledonian's Northern Area Engineer. The book was considered to be particularly appropriate for one of Thomas's sons was then serving as a missionary in Blantyre, a city in what is now known as Malawi.



Looking towards Hilton Junction and its signal cabin from the rear of a northbound goods service as it is about to go into Moncrieff Tunnel.
(Norris Forrest courtesy The Transport Treasury)

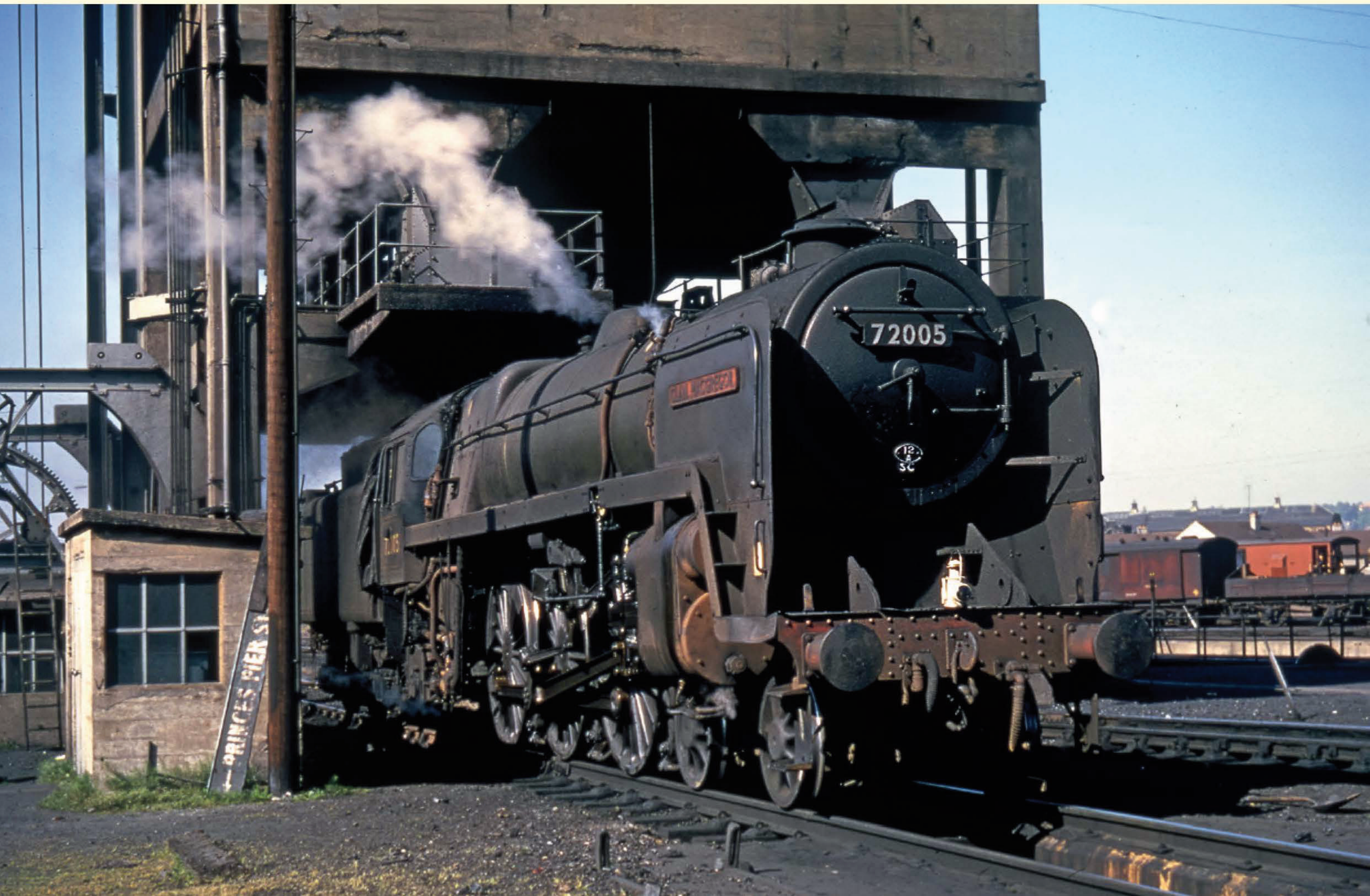


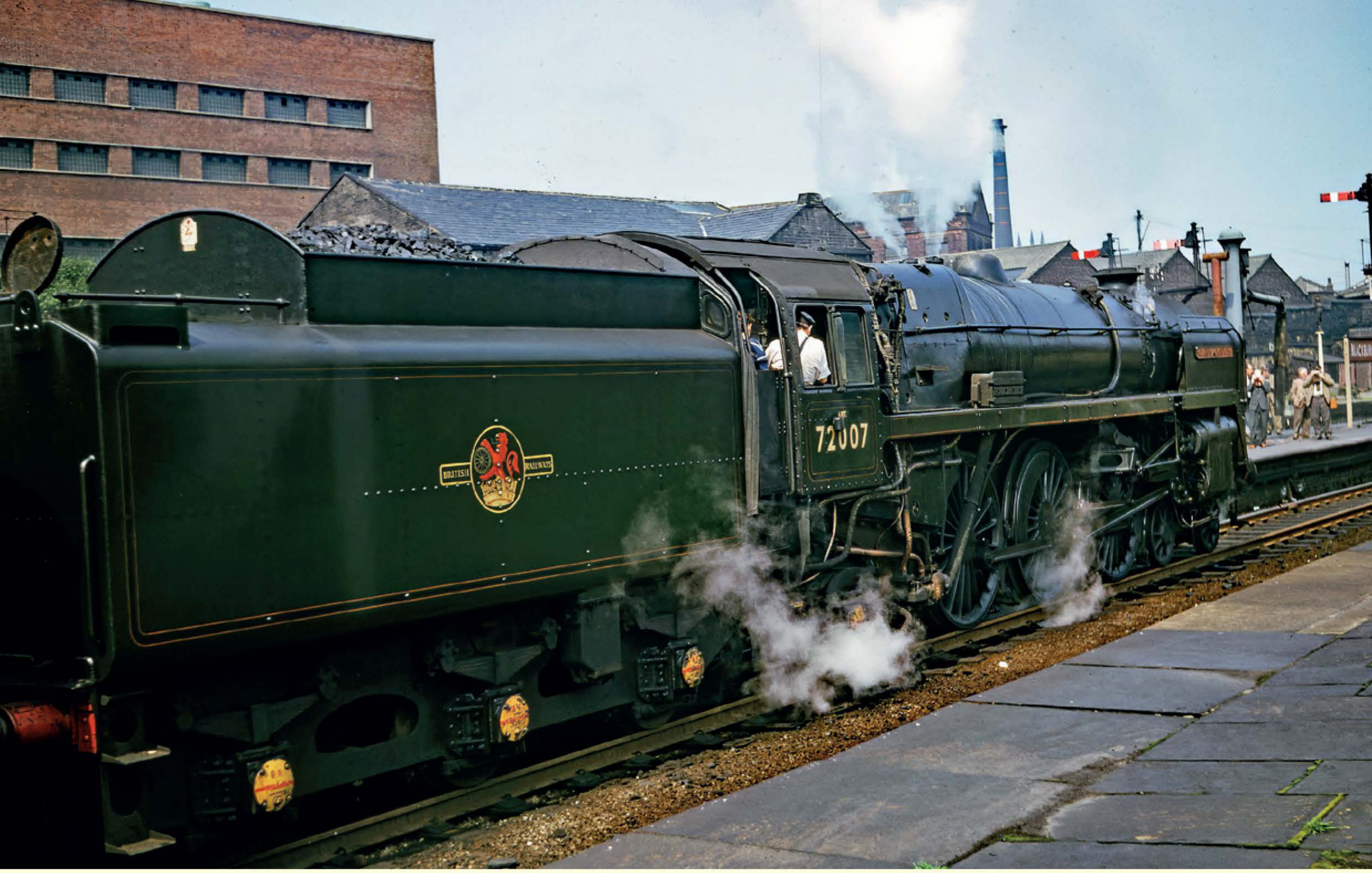
A 'CLAN' GATHERING

The ten Class 6 'Clan' 4-6-2s built in 1951/2 as part of the British Railways Standard locomotive programme were in many respects a lesser verson of the 'Britannia' Pacifics, with a smaller boiler and firebox and a lighter axle loading, though with the same 6ft 2in diameter driving wheels. Their intended area of operation was in Scotland on routes where lower axle loadings were required. An order for a further fifteen (ten for Scotland and five for the Southern Region) was not proceeded with. While not the greatest of the Standard classes, the 'Clans' were competent enough and were arguably the best-looking of the BR tender locomotives.

ABOVE: **The 'Clans' had quite a well-proportioned look to them, as presented by No.72002 *Clan Campbell* at Carlisle in September 1960. All the class were allocated to Scottish Region sheds (which until 1958 included Carlisle Kingmoor) throughout their careers excepting No.72009 had a short spell in 1958 at Stratford for evaluation purposes. No.72002 was at Polmadie depot, Glasgow, at this time and had arrived in Carlisle with an express over the Caledonian route via Beattock.** (Trevor Owen/Colour-Rail.com BRM717)

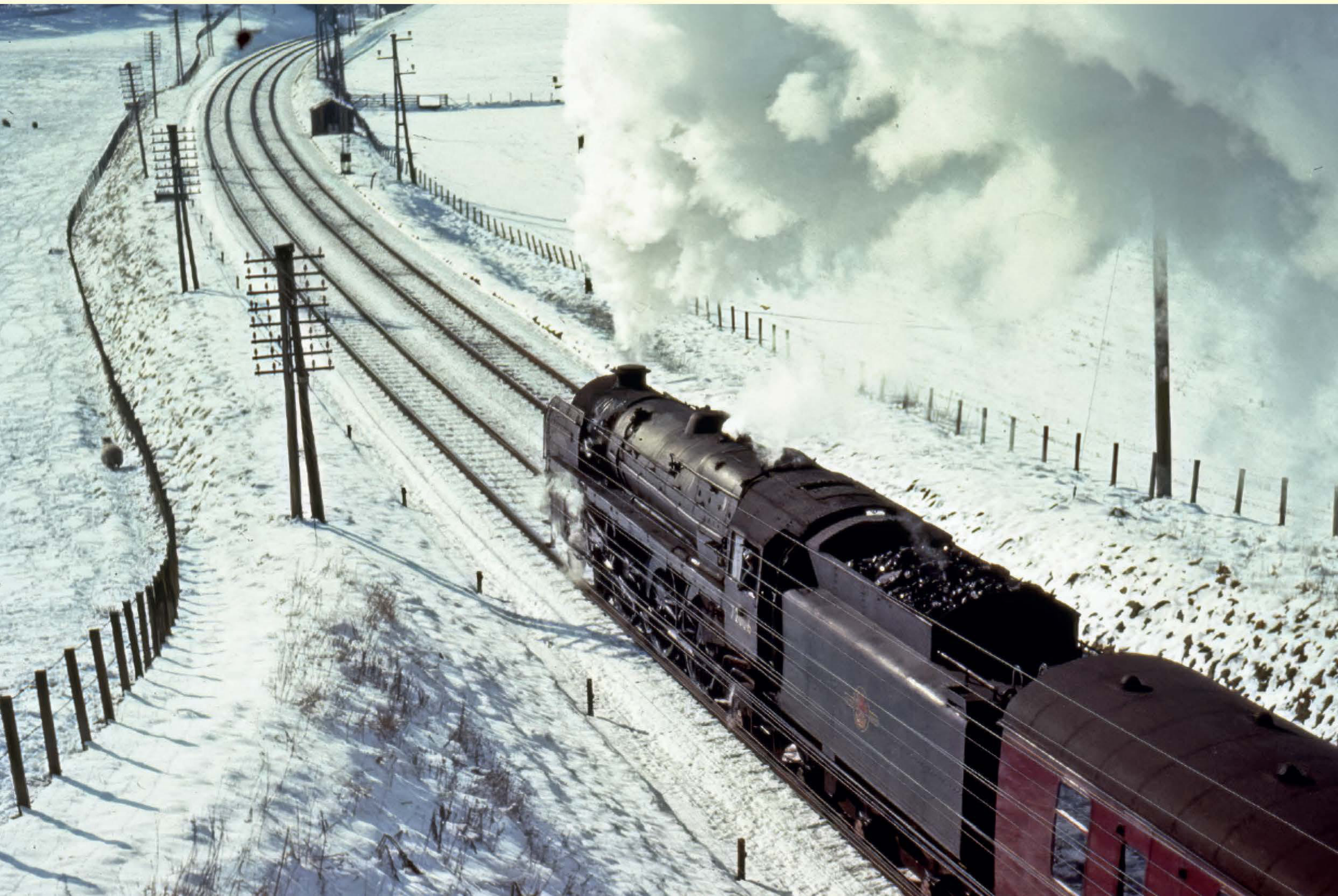
BELOW: **No.72005 *Clan MacGregor* was a Carlisle Kingmoor engine for most of its time with just a short stint at Edinburgh Haymarket. On this occasion in June 1962 it had worked from Carlisle to Perth where it is seen under the coaling plant at the locomotive shed.** (Colour-Rail.com SC461)

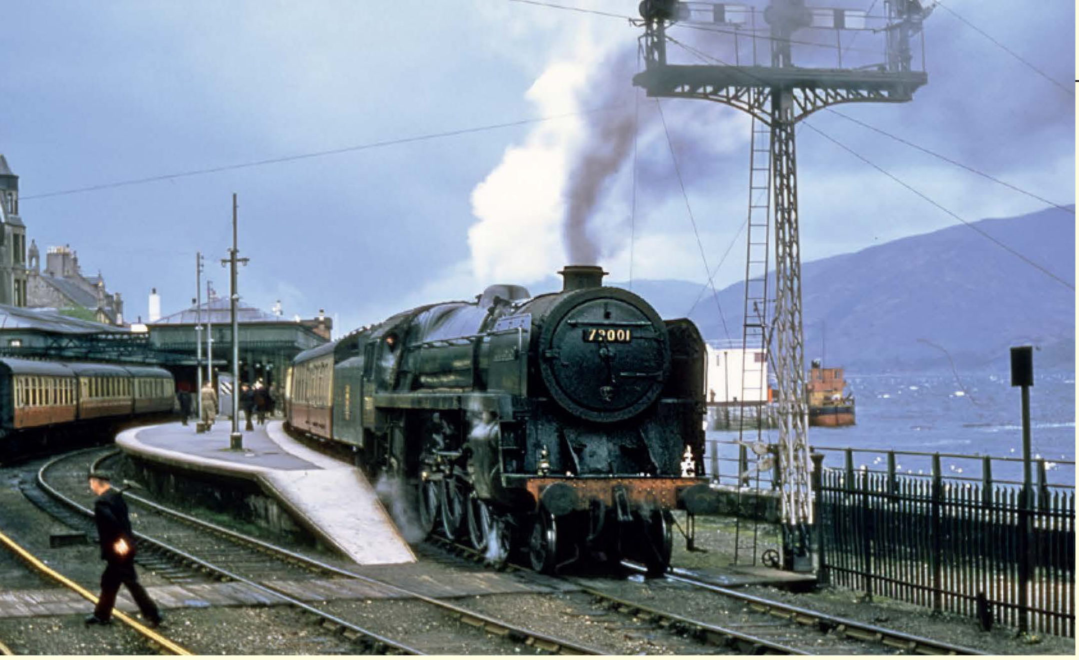




ABOVE: **The 'Clans' spruced up well and No.72007 *Clan MacKintosh* glistens at Blackburn on 23rd May 1964. The occasion was the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society's 'Ribble-Lune' tour from Preston taking in the soon-to-close Southport line, Burscough Bridge, Blackburn, Hellifield, Lancaster and Heysham. No.72007 was a constant resident at Carlisle.** (P. C. Wakefield/Colour-Rail.com 326637)

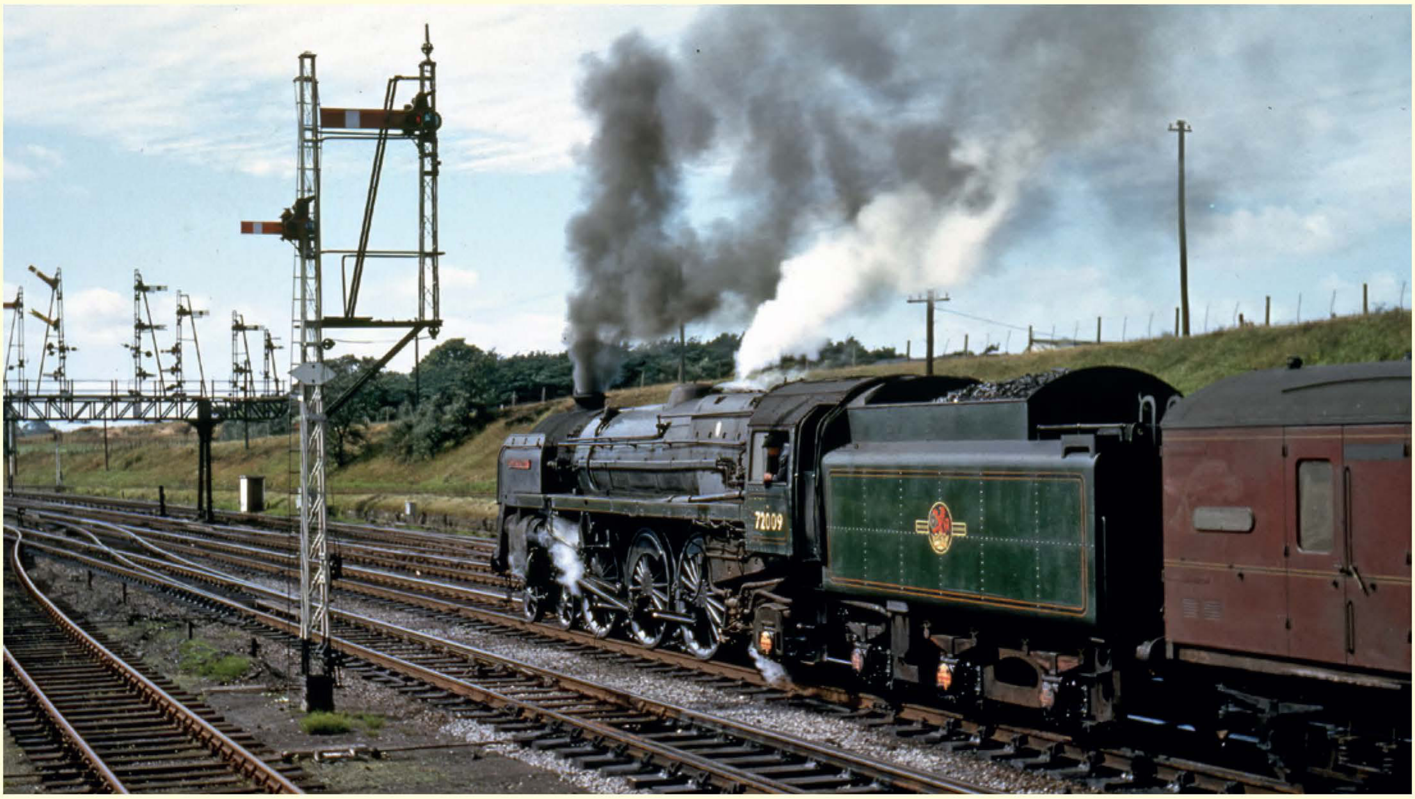
BELOW: **Winter holds the railway in its grip as No.72006 *Clan MacKenzie* hurries an express along the Caledonian line near Gleneagles on 20th February 1964. This member of the class was destined to be the last in service, undertaking its final duty on 11th May 1966.** (K. M. Falconer/Colour-Rail.com 382276)

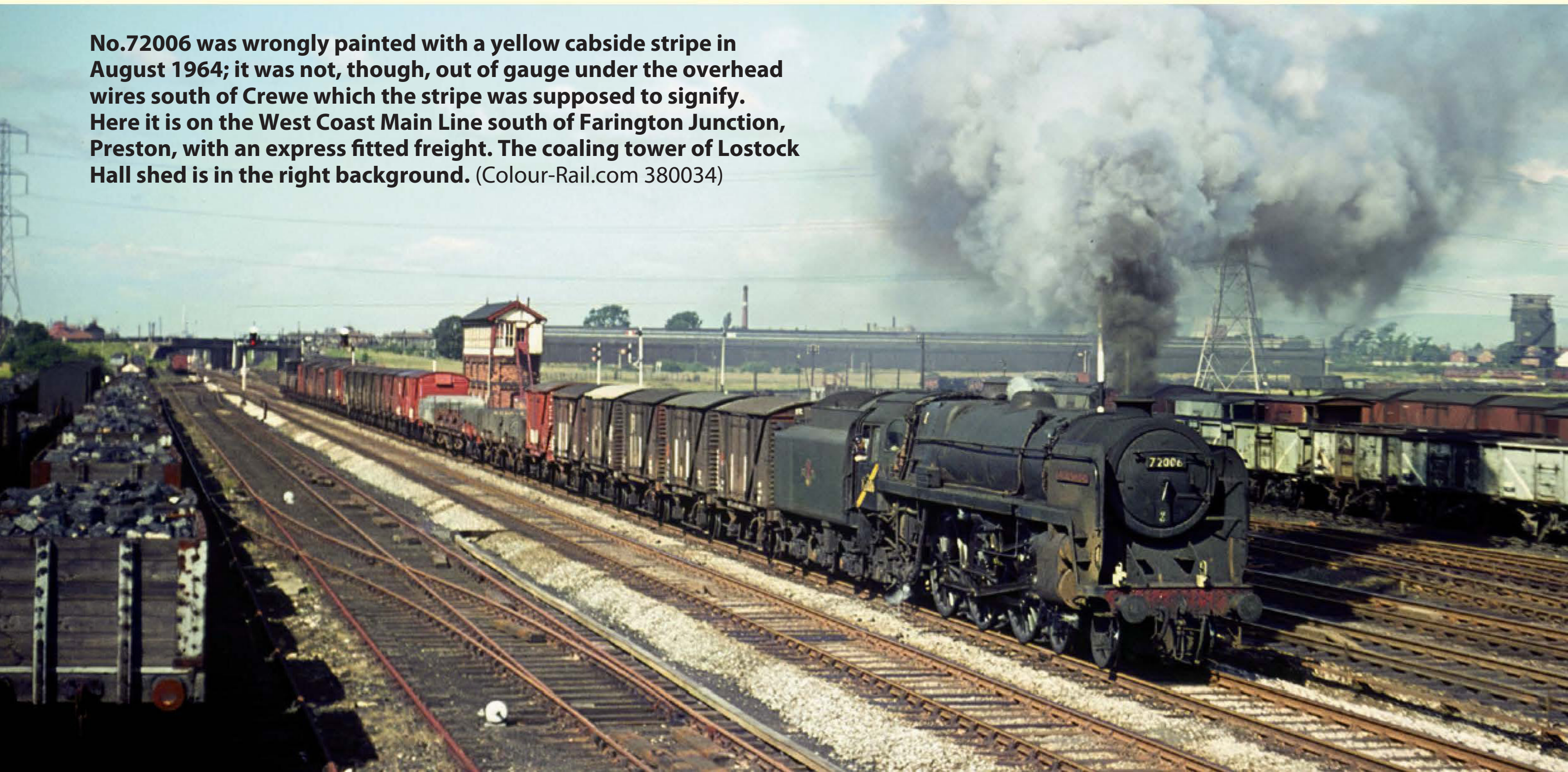




LEFT: **On 16th June 1956 a gathering of the Clan Cameron was held at Achnacarry Castle and No.72001 *Clan Cameron* was sent to the West Highland line to haul the special train from Glasgow Queen Street to Spean Bridge. It is pictured here at Fort William ready to leave on the return. Driver, fireman and guard were all Camerons, though the Fort William enginemen reported the locomotive to be "a rough rider and too long in the wheelbase for the West Highland's curves".** (K. Bannister/Colour-Rail.com SC931)

BELOW: **Down the line the signals beckon No.72009 *Clan Stewart* onwards at Carstairs with a parcels express on 1st August 1964.** (K. M. Falconer/Colour-Rail.com 382287)





No.72006 was wrongly painted with a yellow cabside stripe in August 1964; it was not, though, out of gauge under the overhead wires south of Crewe which the stripe was supposed to signify. Here it is on the West Coast Main Line south of Farington Junction, Preston, with an express fitted freight. The coaling tower of Lostock Hall shed is in the right background. (Colour-Rail.com 380034)

***Deltic*, the locomotive which turned many at head at the lineside and many a mind at the headquarters of the British Transport Commission. Now preserved as part of the National Collection.** (Author)

THE METROVICKS GOOD INTENTIONS DISCARDED

PART ONE BY JOHN PALMER

Introduction

The substantive part of this article concerns the involvement of the Metropolitan Vickers Company in the early stages of the main line dieselisation policy of the British Transport Commission. The article explains how the traction policy of the Commission was revised during the 1950s, the bases upon which the revisions were made and the factors influencing the choice of contractors to build and equip new diesel locomotives. The article includes operational details for the one full year of operation on the Midland Division of British Railways, London Midland Region.

Policy developments

During the first half of the 1950s the traction policy for the main lines of British Railways was subjected to radical change.

From the time of nationalisation (1948) up to 1953 the policy was established around a continuation of steam power until such time as electrification could be afforded and then progressively implemented. During the same time period there was a continuous disagreement between the two organisations involved – the Railway Executive (RE) and the British Transport Commission (BTC) – as regards which was the maker of policy. In the organisational vacuum between the two, Robin Riddles as Chief Mechanical Engineer for the RE, proceeded with his two principal assistants Roland Bond (design and construction) and Ernest Cox (maintenance) to develop new Standard steam locomotives of varying power. In addition, the six Regions (Western, Southern, London Midland, Eastern, North Eastern, Scottish) were allowed to continue building steam locomotives as designed pre-nationalisation.

The RE took some organisational interest in electrification. With a collection of widely spread suburban lines inherited in 1948 and the soon to be completed main line route over and through the Pennines between Manchester and Sheffield (opened in 1954), Stanley Warder was appointed in 1950 as Chief Officer (Electrical Engineer).

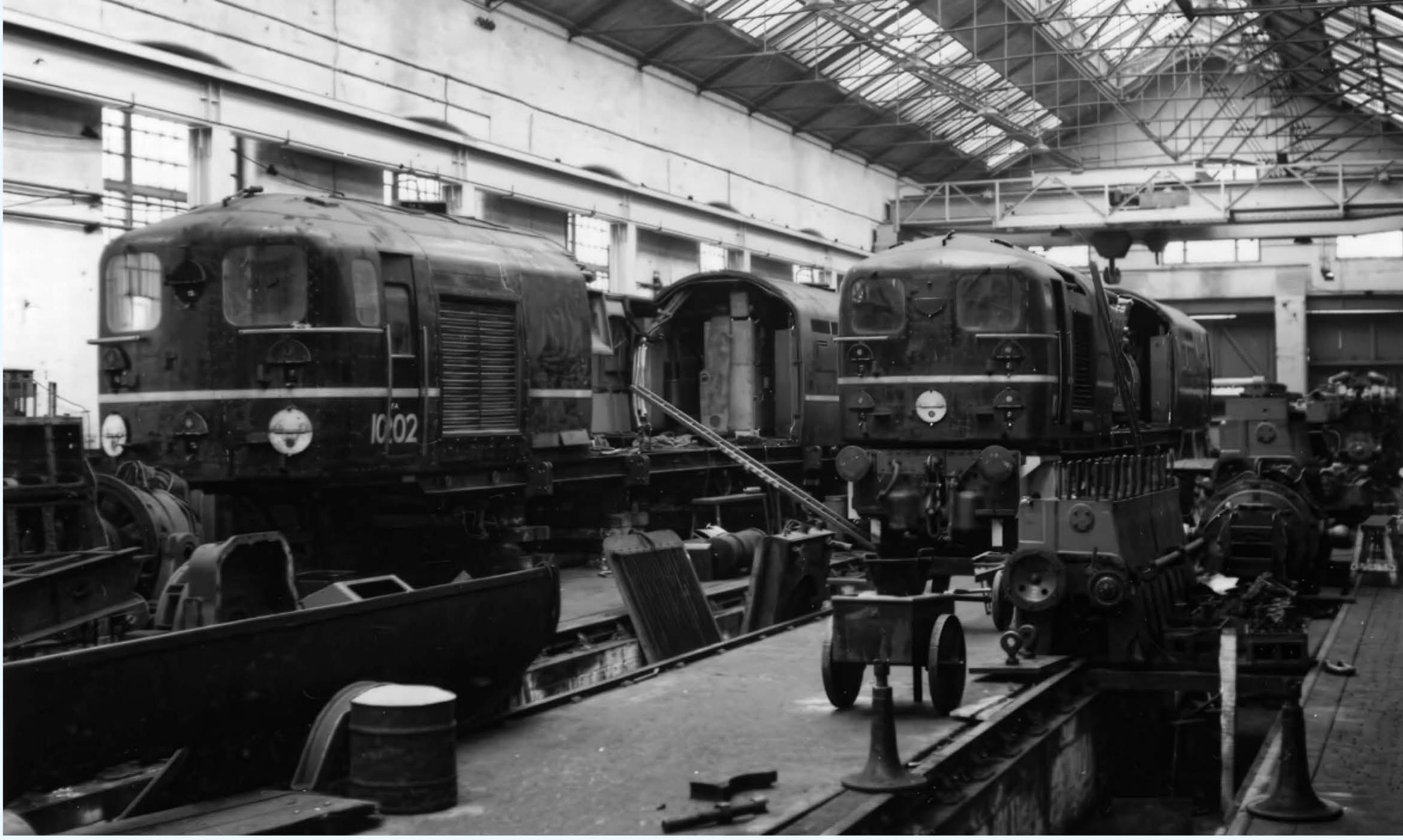
For main line diesels Riddles chose to not follow the lead of either the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS) or Southern Railway – George Ivatt and Oliver Bulleid respectively – who, in the approach to nationalisation, had developed with the English Electric Company (EE) a total of four main line Co-Co (six axles, all powered) diesels. The pair of the LMS were Nos.10000 and 10001, for the SR Nos.10201 and 10202. The SR and EE had in mind a third locomotive and to be a more powerful variant.

Within the RE responsibility for motive power was shared between Riddles and Michael Barrington-Ward. They established with the Regions a committee which in 1951 submitted to the RE a report which noted the successful introduction of main line diesels in North America, post-war advances in mainland Europe with electrification and the introduction elsewhere of diesel railcars. The report recommended the electrification of the King's Cross–Grantham section of the Eastern Region, trials with diesels capable of 2,000hp (the SR/EE development project) and development of a proposed introduction of diesel railcars. The RE accepted the recommendation of electrification in principle, though not necessarily the route, rejected as being premature the recommendation for diesels based upon then existing and unconvincing data regarding Nos.10000/1 and 10201/2, but accepted the recommendation regarding diesel railcars for secondary and branch lines. At that time the use of diesel mechanical shunting locomotives in sorting yards was well established and accepted as policy with locomotives built in BR workshops with private industry engines (mainly EE and Armstrong Whitworth).

The Transport Act 1953 abolished the RE and sought via a strengthened BTC to allow the six Regions enhanced powers through delegation. Messrs. Riddles and (Sir Michael) Barrington-Ward retired from railway service and Bond was appointed to the role of Chief Engineer (Mechanical) in the Central Staff of the BTC. As the long-term understudy to Riddles, Bond was also an advocate of continuing to gain the maximum possible efficiency from steam traction and envisaged electrification as being the source of transition. Warder was similarly transferred to the Central Staff of the BTC and become Chief Engineer (Electrical). Bond and Warder reported to John Ratter who was a civil engineer and who, in turn, reported to the Commission at Member level. In terms of policy development Warder had the more pressing issue of selection of a standard future supply system for other than the Southern Region (SR) which had in place an extensive system of third rail ground level supply.

Within the members of the BTC a non-engineering-led advocate of the early introduction of diesel multiple units was Frank Pope (previously with the RE and involved 1951-58) who, as Chairman of the Ulster Transport Authority, had seen the benefits of introduction in his province.

Away from the corridors of power, Nos.10000/1 plus 10201/2 found employment on the London Midland Region (LM) and SR with the latter pair joined from March 1954 by the new 2,000hp No.10203. After initially working on the Waterloo–Bournemouth line and demonstrating its capabilities it was placed into a then thought very demanding diagram involving two return trips daily



In 1956 each of the three English Electric-built diesels numbered 10201-3 was given a major overhaul at Derby Locomotive Works. Following on from the overhaul each locomotive was turned out in the express passenger green livery with orange/black/orange lining. (BR official/Author's Collection)

between Waterloo and Exeter. Between March and August the locomotive turned many a head at the lineside and turned several minds in places of greater influence.

At Government level the Treasury signalled via the Department of Transport and Aviation that it would consider proposals in 1954/5 from the BTC for a programme of capital investment. The BTC was lagging behind the other two industries nationalised following the Second World War; coal and electricity had both successfully submitted their plans. As a former director of the Great Western Railway, the Chancellor (Harold MacMillan, later Prime Minister) knew well that capital directed at efficiency improvements was the only likely saviour for the railways. The BTC tasked a Planning Committee to come forward with proposals which it did, though largely based upon old ideas, insufficiently forward-thinking and with a lack of relevant forecasting of future demand. The traction policy recommendations of the Planning Committee included the main lines out of King's Cross and Euston as far as Doncaster/Leeds and Manchester/Liverpool respectively, an extension of the Liverpool Street to Chelmsford electrification to Felixstowe and, for the SR, the Kent Coast lines. The bigger traction policy recommendation was, however, for main line diesels. In August 1954 it was reported that a 2,000hp diesel-electric locomotive was likely to prove more economical than its Class 7 steam equivalent over 70,000 miles annually and without taking into account the higher availability of the diesel. With that the case promoted by the lobby for steam collapsed.

As there was at that time only one main line diesel capable of 2,000hp (No.10203) and it had then been in service for six months, it was a shallow basis upon which to base a far-reaching recommendation. Nevertheless, the BTC accepted the recommendation and included in the proposals to Government a large sum for an initial investment and no new express or suburban passenger steam locomotives after the 1956 programme.

Out of the planning process the Regions had emerged as being influential and Bond's long-held belief in a main line steam to electric transition had been shattered. Warder needed (and did decide) to finalise a policy to adopt 25kV ac overhead supply as the standard for main lines other than SR and Ratter had support for civil and signalling technology improvements and an automatic warning system for train control.

When the proposals were put forward by the BTC to Government the extent of main line electrification that could be afforded and supported by industry was reduced and a decision taken based upon future traffic density. Logically, that decision favoured the larger industrial and commercial cities of Manchester and Liverpool (plus possibly Birmingham if the scope of the project was widened) over Leeds and Doncaster. It meant that the ER would be looking for main line diesels.

The Government underwrote a Modernisation Plan (1955) for £1,240 million. In the short term Bond arranged for the five main line diesel locomotives to be concentrated on the Western Division of the LM and serviced at Willesden, north London.

Private industry took note of the changing policy. EE was active in the export market for locomotives and as the only UK-based company capable of producing 'in house' complete locomotives, it was seeking to position itself for future home orders. The company decided to invest its own capital in a prototype, high-powered diesel-electric main line locomotive and make it available to the BTC/BR for trials; in other words, place it in the shop window. In a striking blue livery relieved by lining, *Deltic* emerged in autumn 1955 and was accepted for trials. Producing 3,300hp, the operational characteristics of the locomotive in accelerating soon had the timetable planning department looking to prepare new section graphs based upon performances never previously seen for timetabled express passenger trains. As it was, the *Deltic* cruised along well within steam timings.

Having received underwriting by the Government for funding, Bond was remitted to come forward with proposals for an initial tranche of main line diesels.

Development of the remit

In developing his remit Bond had to acknowledge the influences of Government, the Regions and the railway supply industry both nationalised and privately owned.

When making capital funds available from the public purse, Governments often prescribe how the monies would best be expended. In this case competition was possible. However, the inclusion of the most advanced supplier of diesel engines in North America would potentially lead to UK suppliers being disadvantaged and the international balance of trade figures worsened.

The Regions were most vocal from Paddington (WR) and King's Cross (ER). The WR was minded to at least understand the potential of diesel-hydraulic locomotives and, having lost out on electrification from King's Cross, the ER was looking for early benefits from the 2,000hp diesel-electrics.

The private railway supply industry was represented by the Locomotive Manufacturers Association (LMA) while the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) represented its wide membership in the BR workshops. Members of the LMA included leading exporters of steam locomotives to Commonwealth countries which were beginning to anticipate a need to either adapt to a transition or cease production; it also included exporters of diesel and electric locomotives who were keen to develop products at home for later sale overseas.

Bond was able to meet head-on all these influences.

Competition for diesel engines and transmissions was plentiful in the UK where, as previously mentioned, only EE was capable of producing complete locomotives. Various builders in the UK, including those for traditional steam locomotive production for home (BR workshops) and overseas (private), could supply the bogies and mechanical parts. It was decided that the principal builder in North America – General Motors – would be allowed potential access to the UK market only if it entered a licence agreement for production in the UK by a UK-registered entity. In 1955 Bond took a party to Germany to assess the relative merits of diesel-hydraulic technology. The visit proved successful and agreement was reached whereby under a licence agreement Swindon (WR/BR) workshops would build a small number of chassis and the German engines would interface with British electrical transmission systems. Finally, as EE had already demonstrated an ability to produce a 2,000hp diesel-electric locomotive the ER could expect to be an early recipient of further examples.

Bond's personal and professional interest in two-stroke engines could be accommodated in the overall scheme. Expressions of interest were sought and prompted a healthy response.

Metropolitan Vickers Ltd.

If, depending upon the response to the BTC, a list of potential tenderers/contractors was to be drawn up, Metropolitan Vickers Ltd. (MV) would have a strong case for inclusion.

The enterprise was founded in 1899 by American George Westinghouse as the British Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company (BWE); its assets and managerial control were acquired in 1917 by the Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon and Finance Company (MCWF) and Vickers Ltd. (V) with the latter company then purchasing the entire shareholding of MCWF. The name Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company Ltd. was adopted in 1919.

The workshops of MV were originally in Manchester, with a second site at Sheffield added as MV developed its range of heavy electrical engineering products such as generators, steam turbines, transformers and railway traction equipment.

In 1928 MV merged with the similarly sized British Thomson-Houston (BTH) with a prospect of them together being able to compete with EE and with Marconi. In the following year the theoretically merged companies were acquired by Associated Electrical Industries (AEI), but it proved to be a failure as each company refused to integrate and functioned independently.

In 1949 MV and Manchester-based builder of steam locomotives for export Beyer, Peacock & Co. (BP) formed a joint venture to design and manufacture diesel-electric and gas turbine locomotives. BP was then heavily committed and to provide production facilities, a post-war vacated factory at Stockton-on-Tees was taken by MV on lease. The factory had a connection to the BR network at Bowesfield Junction, through which export locomotives could be taken to dock facilities nearby.

Railway contracts of Metropolitan Vickers and its antecedents

Contracts for railways started in 1903 and extended to the 1950s, varied between complete locomotives and equipment for locomotives and included electric, gas turbine and diesel locomotives. Contracts were awarded for the home market and overseas.

Home market contracts to mid-1950s

The first contract was placed by the Metropolitan Railway (MR), then Baker Street some 50 miles to Verney Junction in Buckinghamshire, with MCWF for a batch of ten electric locomotives with BWE electrical equipment. A further batch of ten followed, again from MCWF, but with BTH control equipment. By the start of the 1920s the locomotives were in need of major overhauls and Vickers was asked to assess the engineering and electrical viability of such work. Vickers' advice was that replacement was a better option and MR then committed a contract for twenty locomotives which were built in 1922-23 by Vickers and the fifteen locomotives that remained in 1953 were fitted with BTH traction control equipment. All remaining locomotives were withdrawn from public service in 1962 and two are preserved.

The next home supply contract was a very protracted affair and was associated with the much delayed London & North Eastern Railway project to electrify the former Great Central Railway route between Manchester London Road and Sheffield Victoria/Wath yard. Seventy sets of electrical equipment for locomotives were ordered from MV in 1939, but then wartime (and the death of Sir Nigel Gresley as Chief Mechanical Engineer) placed an embargo on plans. After the war a reassessment resulted in a contract for 57 electric Bo-Bo locomotives which were built at BP's Gorton works with electrical equipment installed at the nearby MV Dukinfield works. The locomotives were introduced into service from the opening in 1954 and one is preserved. For the same route it was decided to build seven electric Co-Co locomotives and these also were built, as for the earlier batch, at Gorton with completion at Dukinfield. Three of the locomotives are preserved; one being in Holland to which state railway the class was sold in 1969. Of interest to this article is that the design of the bogies owed much to that applied to Nos.10000/1 in 1947.

No.10201 was the first of the Southern Region's diesel-electric locomotives, completed at Ashford Works in 1951 with English Electric engine and electrical equipment. (Pendragon Collection)

Following nationalisation the Western Region of BR was keen to try gas turbine technology for main line passenger services. Two new locomotives were ordered and MV produced at its Manchester Trafford Park works in 1950 locomotive No.18100. That locomotive and its sister (which originated in Switzerland) had such thirsts for fuel oil that they proved uneconomical and the project was terminated. The two locomotives were not scrapped, No.18100 found further use in rebuilt form (see later) and No.18000 remains preserved as an empty shell on bogies.

Overseas export contracts to mid-1950s

Bond's first traceable working contact with MV was in 1927 when he was working at Vulcan Foundry. As a junior member of staff he was sent to Bombay to help supervise the construction of a class of electric locomotives for the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. Working alongside him in a similar capacity was a team sent by MV as supplier of the electrical equipment.

In the 1930s the Italian State Railway embarked upon a large-scale build programme for a new class (E.626) of electric locomotives. MV was one of several suppliers contracted to supply electrical equipment. Electrical equipment for a new class of 70 164-ton 2-Co-Co-2 locomotives in Brazil was ordered in 1937, but the contract was terminated upon direction of the British government.

There were two contracts for locomotives to be used in Australia. The West Australia Government Railway (WAGR), with a 3ft 6in track gauge, ordered an eventual total of 38 2-D-2 diesel locomotives equipped with Crossley engines. The locomotives were shipped and entered service between 1954 and 1956. Six have been preserved in Australia and, at the time of writing (early 2025) one is operational. The New South Wales Government Railways, with a 4ft 8½in track gauge, ordered 40 electric locomotives which also were built at Stockton-on-Tees and entered service between 1956 and 1958. One is preserved in Australia.

The railways of Ireland (CIE) with a 5ft 3in track gauge ordered an eventual total of 94 diesel locomotives of two classes, each fitted with the same Crossley V8 two-stroke design of engines as supplied to WAGR, which entered service from 1955. MV traction motors and main generators had been used successfully in two diesel locomotives of CIE built locally in 1950.

In the process of commercial development was a large-scale order from South African Railways (SAR) with its 3ft 6in track gauge preparing for a programme of several hundred new electric locomotives. The first contract was for 135 locomotives (introduced from 1959) followed by others for 555 sets of electrical equipped fitted at the South African-based builder. Changes in the UK supply industry resulted in the actual supplier being named as AEI and with BTH nominated to supply some electrical equipment. The initial build of locomotive was at Stockton-on-Tees. MV also supplied in the 1950s electrical equipment for electric shunting locomotives for SAR and private industry in South Africa.

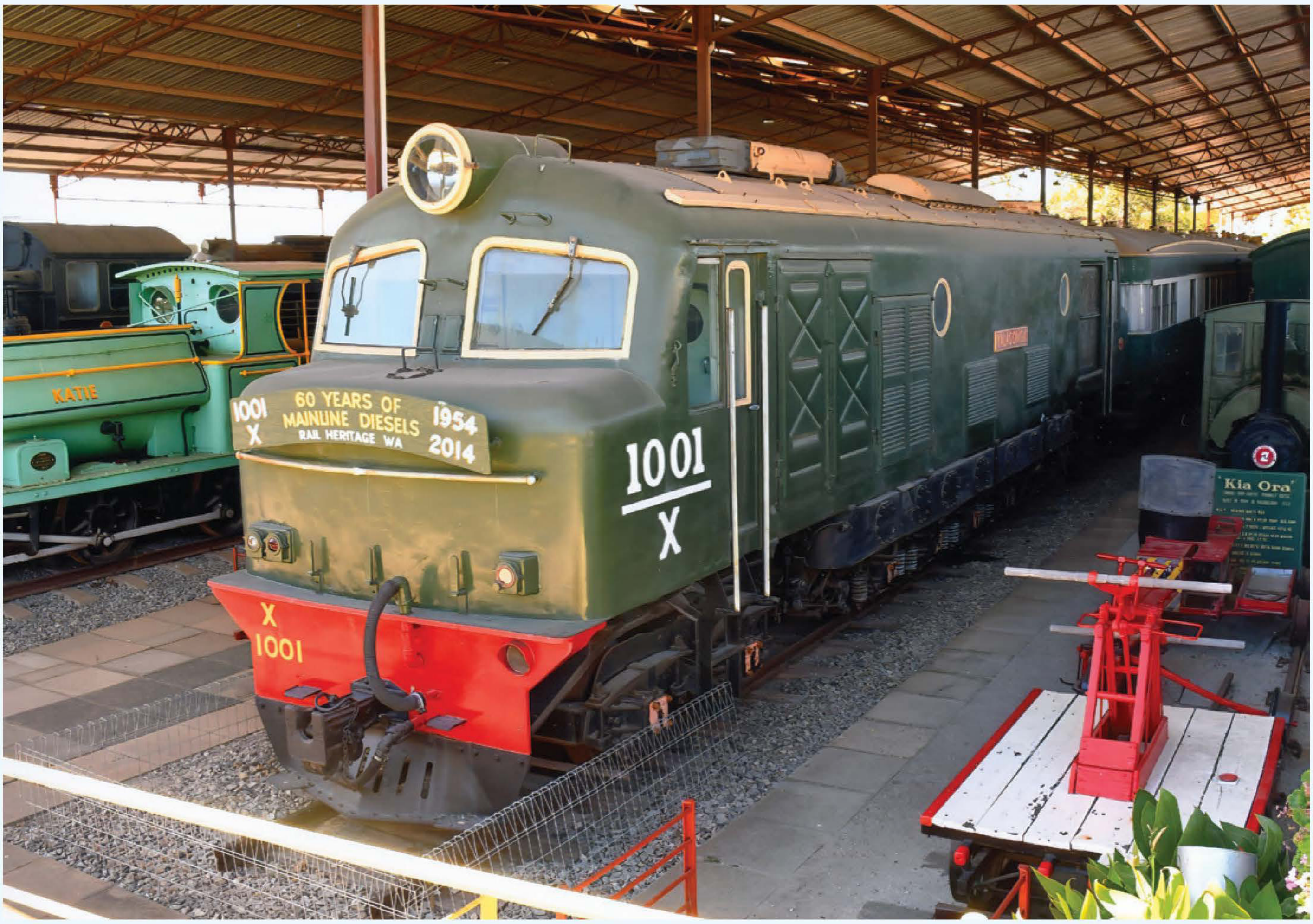
With that record of involvement at home and overseas, MV had a strong case for inclusion in any list of firms to which an invitation to tender might be sent by the BTC. The response of MV to the BTC was but one of many received by Bond who then was able with Warder to establish the specification of requirements.

Procurement process of the BTC

The invitations to tender produced over 200 separate offers to supply. That allowed orders for a total of 174 locomotives which included seven makes of engines, eight variants of transmissions and with bodies, bogies and mechanical parts from seven builders. The power output ranged from 800hp to 2,300hp, 109 were four powered axles, 160 were to have electric transmissions and of that 160, 100 locomotives were to be in the 1,000hp to 1,250hp power band.

Of the suppliers EE may have been disappointed with an order for a total of 40 locomotives of three power outputs and was soon to assert its claim as market leader. MV received an order for twenty locomotives in the 1,200hp range with an expectation of the BTC that a two-stroke diesel-electric engine would be installed.

The lead times to availability of the locomotives varied between 18 and 24 months and with commitments of contracts by the BTC in October/November 1955 that suggested an influx from mid-1957 and peaking in numbers terms at the end of that



An example of the first batch of 2-D-2 (rigid centre frame) locomotives built by MV for use on the 3ft 6in gauge Western Australia Government Railway. The locomotive is now preserved at a museum in Bassendean, Perth, WA. (Author)

Manchester–Sheffield-Wath route Bo-Bo electric No.26034 at Wath depot in January 1952. These locomotives with MV electrical equipment were giving good performances following completion of the Woodhead route electrification in 1954. (Pendragon Collection)

year. That timescale would allow the Regional allocations of locomotives and for servicing, maintenance and technically trained engineers to be available. An integral part of the process was to then allow a trial period of three years (to the end of 1960) prior to standardisation with a limited number of types of locomotives.

The expected arrival of 28 locomotives having a power output of 2,000hp or more would barely disturb the arrangements with steam and three Regions (Western, Southern and Eastern) decided to proceed with low capital cost modifications of certain express locomotives to enhance steaming performance (Western and Eastern). The Southern Region went further with a programme to rebuild a total of 90 Classes 7 and 8 locomotives. The building of new steam locomotives was coming to its pre-planned end and by 1958 was expected to be concentrated upon heavy freight train locomotives to be built at Crewe and Swindon. Derby Locomotive Works was where the build of 30 locomotives of two types allocated to BR would be arranged and thus take advantage of the experience with Nos.10000/1 and 10201-3 (all given overhauls there in 1956) and with the Chief Mechanical Engineer (soon to be "and Electrical") located also in Derby. It looked, and was, a good plan.

In the midst of the BTC procurement process EE had placed in the shop window a prototype 3,300hp diesel-electric Co-Co named *Deltic*. It had been offered to and accepted by the BTC and arrangements made for it to run in public service on the LM Region out of Euston. The loan arrangement included technical staff from EE and a maintenance regime overseen by that company. The locomotive was an immediate success and further weakened any remaining support within the steam to electrification traction policy lobby.

Timing favourable to MV

The timing of the contract award to MV was favourable to that company. The diesel locomotives delivered to WAGR had not enjoyed a trouble-free introduction. Being 12,000 shipping miles away it was unlikely that word of serious difficulties was being encountered with the Crossley engines and faults trending from endemic to epidemic would reach the BTC. Much nearer to home, and within the sphere of Frank Pope, the locomotives being delivered to Ireland were experiencing a similar range of problems.

In contrast, the electric locomotives on the Manchester–Sheffield/Wath line had settled down successfully and provided an alternative reference point.

Allocation of locomotives to Regions

With contractors working on designs for locomotives, the attention of Bond turned towards their deployment following delivery and acceptance.

The only input of the Regions other than the Western had been at the Planning Committee (that resulted in the Modernisation Plan of 1955) stage. On the assumption that the electrification of the Kent Coast lines was authorised, the SR could see merit in having some diesels for use in its Eastern and Central Divisions. The Scottish Region had advised no interest, but would no doubt be receptive to through workings of diesels on Anglo-Scottish services. The North Eastern Region was by far the smallest Region and heavily dependent upon goods traffic; the management could see benefit from through engine working between Newcastle and Liverpool and Leeds to Carlisle.

The Eastern Region was more willing. Of its three main lines the Great Northern had lost out on electrification and the need was identified as an average speed over long distances that a 2,000hp diesel with a heavy express was unlikely to be able to deliver. However, the Great Eastern line out of Liverpool Street to Norwich, with an easy gradient profile and nine carriages, would be ideal for a 2,000hp machine and the terrain of East Anglia would be a good base for the less powerful types. The third main line was out of Marylebone and subject to discussions on future Regional responsibility. Cross-London transfer goods traffic was considerable and with Temple Mills yard the Region could see benefit from low and medium power ranges being deployed on suburban passenger trains for the morning and evening peak demand periods, then being used at night on goods around the capital.

In its responses to the Planning Committee the LM, as the largest Region, had been very lukewarm as regards diesels. The Region had three Divisions; Western out of Euston to Crewe via either the Trent valley or West Midlands loop, then Manchester/Liverpool and north to Carlisle, Midland out of St. Pancras to Manchester via Derby and to Sheffield via either Corby or Leicester to Nottingham/Erewash Valley, and Central which was mainly the former routes of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway. With electrification authorised from Manchester/Liverpool at least as far as Crewe, with an expectation of an extension to London Euston, the general management could be excused for declining the opportunity of main line diesels for the Western Division. The Midland Division, with an enhanced timetable then needed to be in place when electrification work started from Manchester, was dependent upon Class 6 steam power; as such, passenger train diesels would be more useful there. The LM Region shared with the Eastern a similar view on cross-London goods traffic. In addition, they had plans for an Anglo-Scottish overnight fast goods train.

Bond could then see a pattern of useful allocations for the 174 locomotives, with the twenty from MV destined for the Midland Division of the LM Region.

1956 brings a further change of policy

Events in 1956 included a crisis around shipping through the Suez Canal, the Clean Air Act and crises at BTC headquarters.

Petrol rationing was imposed and resulted in additional passenger traffic for the railways though little in the way of merchandise goods. The increased demand for passenger accommodation was met by strengthening the usual provision of carriages with others held in reserve as an obligation within the Transport Act 1953 … but added costs.

The Clean Air Act was a measure by the Government in response to deadly smog. BR was allowed a general derogation, but was still summonsed on occasions for excessive smoke at depots.

The crisis at BTC headquarters centred around the financial position for the day-to-day revenue account: whether the railway was at least paying its way. An adverse trend was developing, not only in financial terms, but also in the share of total travel that the railways provided for the needs of the nation.

BTC: Market share of passenger and goods traffic

Year	Net working surplus (A)	Market share Passenger	Market share Goods
	£m	%	%
1953	21.2	20.7	44.3
1954	1.1	19.9	42.3
1955	-17.5	18.6	40.0
1956	-31.3	18.4	39.3

Note A: Revenue less costs, depreciation and amortisation

During the course of the year Bond and Warder had worked on the build programme for 1958. For steam it would then be just one class at two workshops and several workshops would have no new build work. With the test period for the 174 diesel locomotives expected to start in 1958 the attention of Bond and Warder turned to the specification for a class of electric locomotives to support the also new electric multiple units for the Kent Coast lines. The build of the twenty locomotives was allocated to BR Doncaster using EE electrical equipment.

A greater by far challenge was the specification for the 25kV ac electric locomotives for the LM electrification scheme. It was probable that MV would be involved and that influenced an early consideration of having available a locomotive that could be used for training footplate/cab crews. The conversion of former gas turbine No.18100 emerged as the preferred solution and MV was invited to consider it as a one-off project. MV responded positively and production space was allocated at Stockton-on-Tees.

As the year progressed the chairman of the BTC – retired army general Sir Brian Robertson – became increasingly concerned about the deficit on revenue account and forward projections of further decline unless traffic levels increased and an unlikely increase in freight carriage rates was conceded by the Government. The chairman had secured capital investment based upon a financial break-even point being achieved by 1961/62 and, in seeing that becoming less likely to be achieved, could also see the reputation of his Commission becoming tarnished. He then took an extraordinary policy decision that would have consequences about which he surely was either badly misinformed or he chose to dismiss as being manageable. To be fair to the chairman, he may well have been made aware of the feats of *Deltic*.

In late 1956 the locomotive was working with some ease on six days a week a 380-mile London– Liverpool–London diagram, followed early in 1957 by a 600-mile London–Carlisle–London working and with plans for a Crewe–London–Liverpool–London–Crewe working, to give 703 miles per 24 hour day. Those workings included the high profile Glasgow/Aberdeen Travelling Post Office and 'The Lancastrian' morning train for businessmen headed to Liverpool or Manchester.

In his biography Bond covers the change of policy in a very matter of fact manner without emotion.

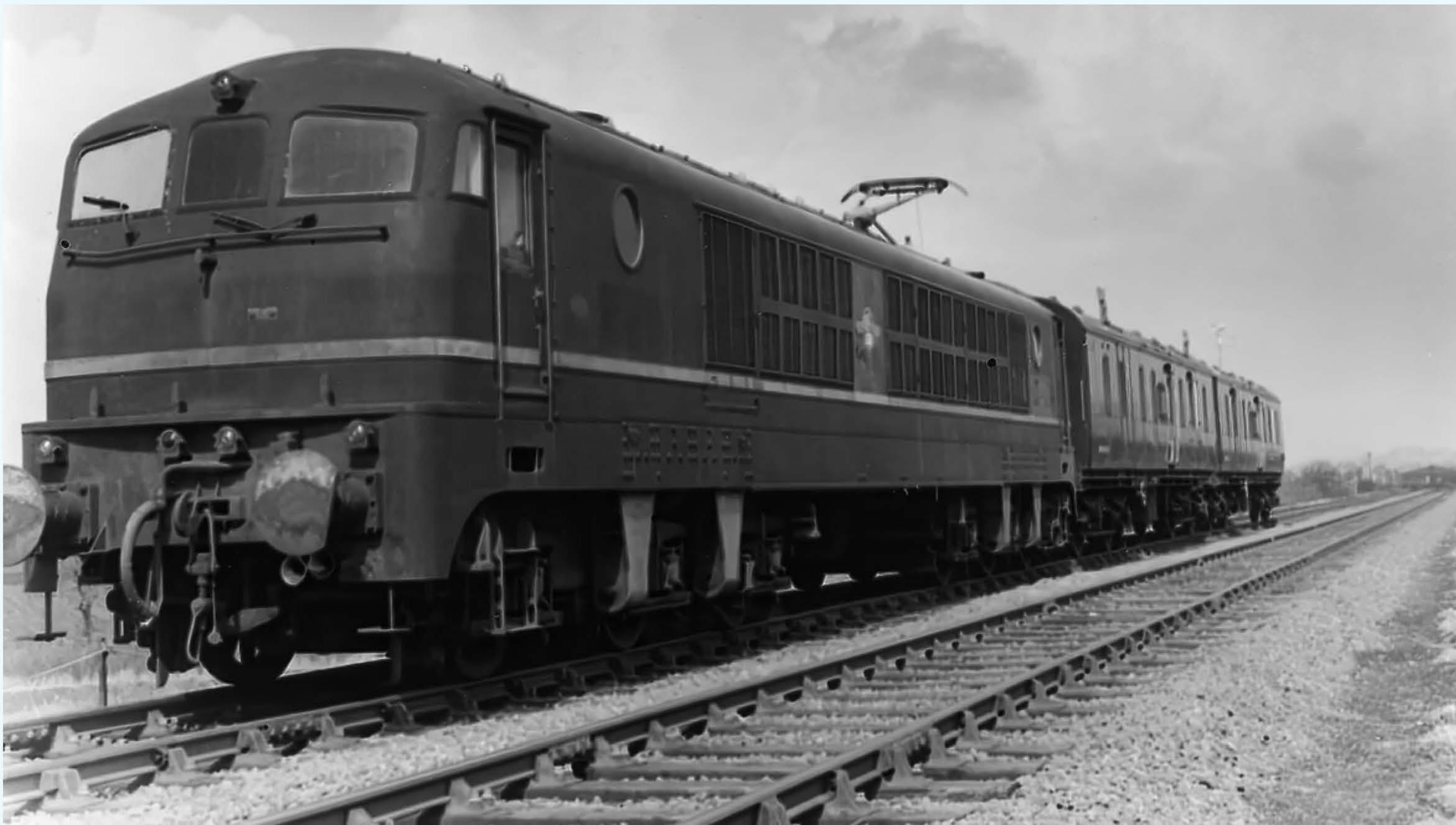
The route to financial salvation was deemed to be the elimination of steam power as fast as possible and its replacement by diesels. Therefore the three-year trial period with the 174 diesels on order would be abandoned and the Commission was prepared to extend and accelerate the introduction of diesel locomotives as rapidly as production capacity would allow. The number of different locomotive designs would also need to be reduced.

Bond's reasonable explanation to his chairman that such a change of policy was a highly risky business and would involve introduction of a large number of diesel locomotives without any having been trialed was overruled.

The effects of this change of policy included that it was highly unlikely that the contract awarded to MV would ever extend beyond twenty 1,200hp locomotives and this was reinforced when the quantity of 1,160hp locomotives on order from BR and BRCW with Sulzer engines was increased by 56.

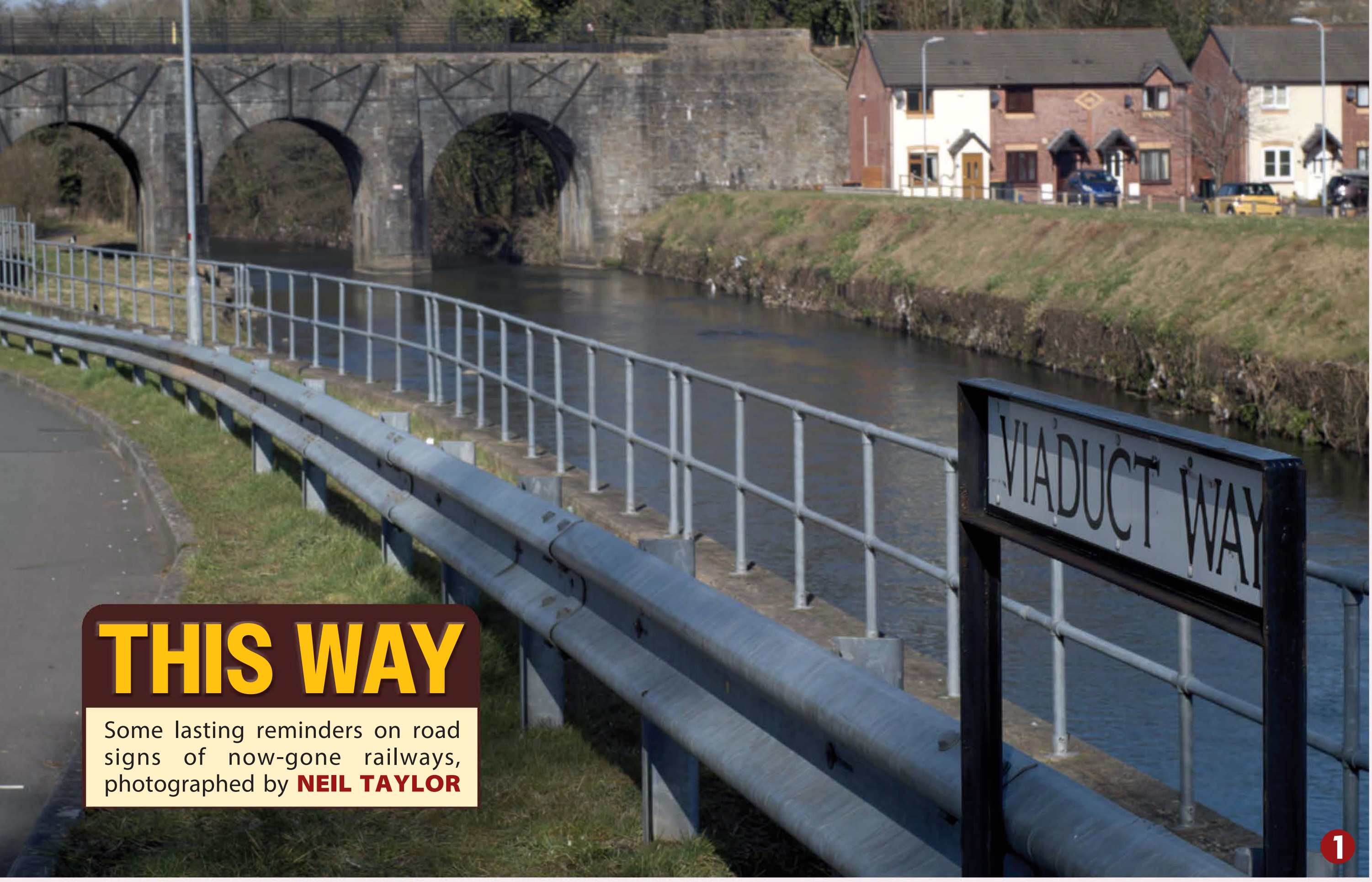
(to be continued)

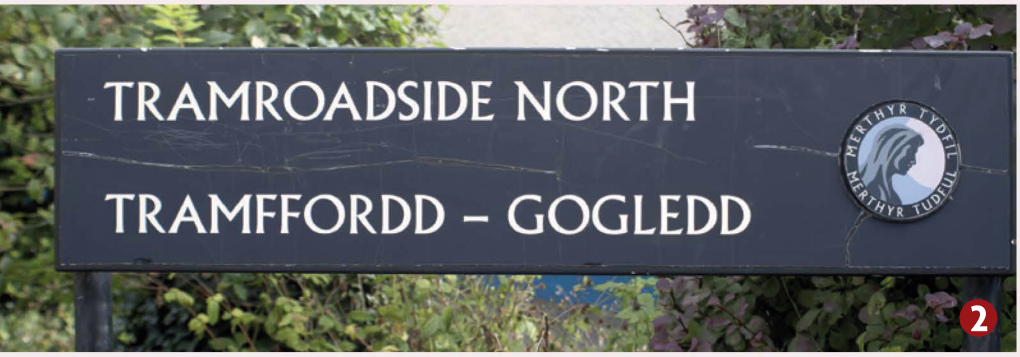
Before the arrival of the new 25kV ac fleet it was decided to covert the former Western Region gas turbine locomotive No.18100 to the role of an ac electric locomotive for training footplatemen in the new motive power. The conversion to 25kV ac was carried out by MV at Stockton and the locomotive retained its original black and aluminium livery. Part of the roof was lowered to accommodate the single pantograph.
(George Shuttleworth/The Manchester Locomotive Society)



THIS WAY

Some lasting reminders on road signs of now-gone railways, photographed by **NEIL TAYLOR**





MIDLAND ROAD
3

RAILWAY STREET
4

RAILWAY TERRACE
5

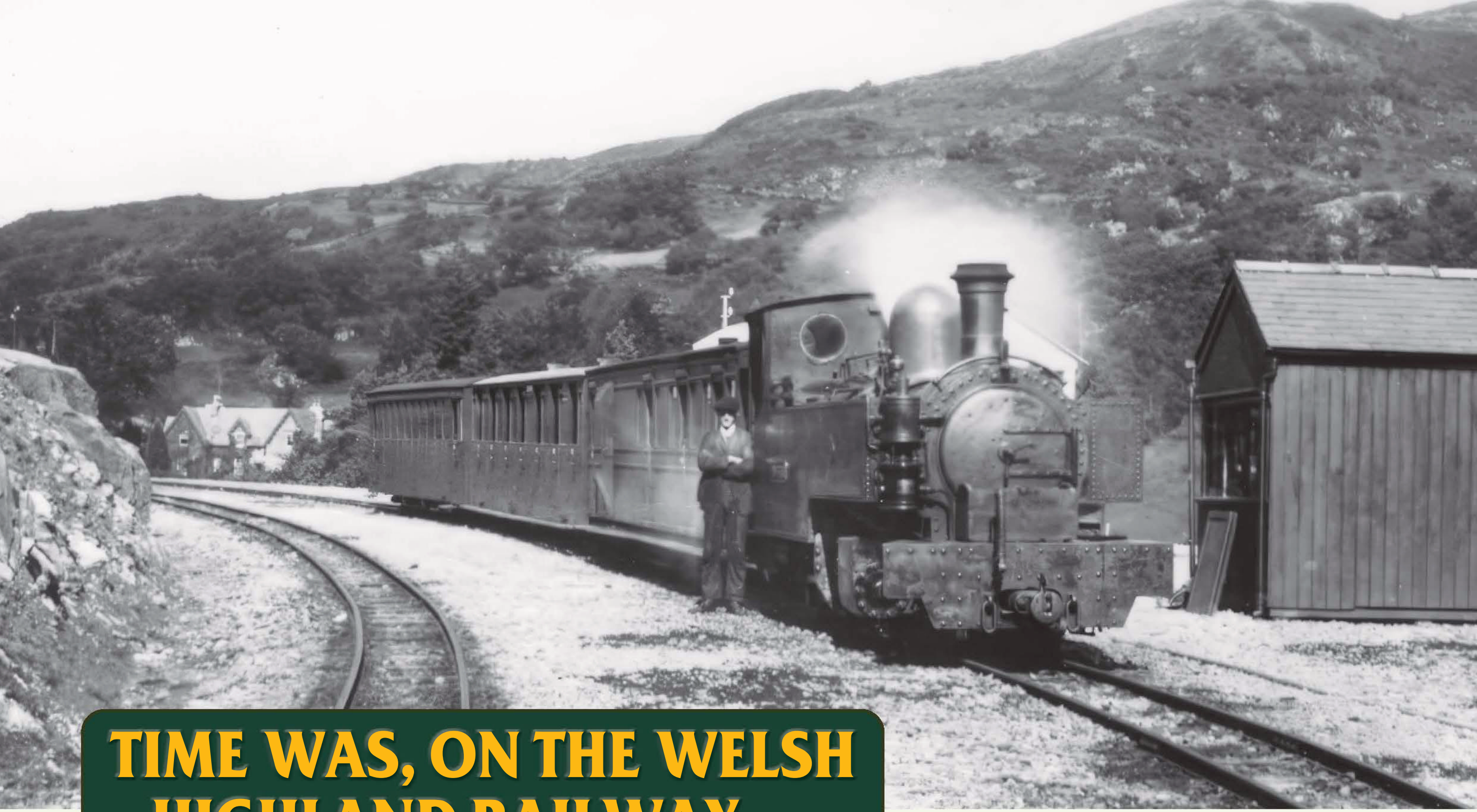
❶ Viaduct Way, Bassaleg, Newport. A modern road built adjacent to the 1826 Rumney Railway viaduct over the Ebbw River (said to be the oldest operational railway viaduct in the world, connecting the quarry at Machen to the Newport–Ebbw Vale branch). 7th March 2015.

❷ Tramroadside North, Merthyr Tydfil. Built along the route of the Penydarren Tramroad, opened in 1802 and famous for the run on 21st February 1804 of Richard Trevithick's engine hauling a train of iron to Abercynon. 13th September 2015.

❸ Midland Road (and Midland Place), Llansamlet, Swansea, were two similarly named streets separated now by a strip of waste land formerly occupied by the former Swansea Valley Railway (leased by the Midland Rialway in 1874 and bought outright in 1876). The line ran to St. Thomas station, Swansea (closed to passengers in 1950) and the docks. Line closed to through traffic in 1964. 8th February 2015.

❹ Railway Street, Risca, Gwent, formerly sandwiched between the Sirhowy Valley branch (now completely obliterated) and the extant branch to Ebbw Vale. 3rd October 2015.

❺ Railway Terrace, Penygraig, Rhondda Valley. A vintage sign set on a house overlooking the former Ely Valley Railway/GWR route from Llantrisant, opened in December 1862 and closed to passengers on 9th May 1958 and goods on 12th October 1964 (now a road). 13th September 2015.

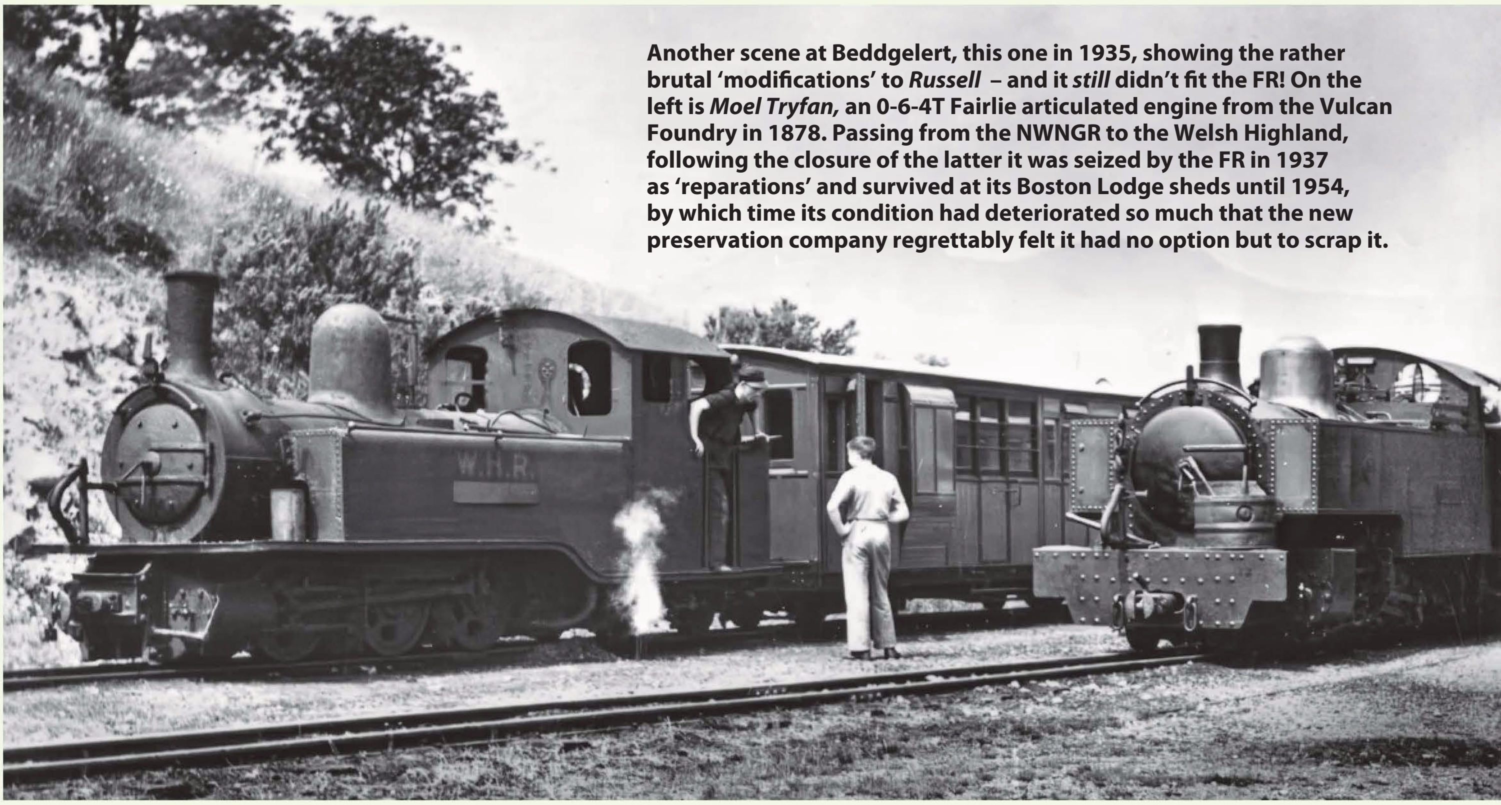


TIME WAS, ON THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY. . .

FROM THE PENDRAGON ARCHIVES

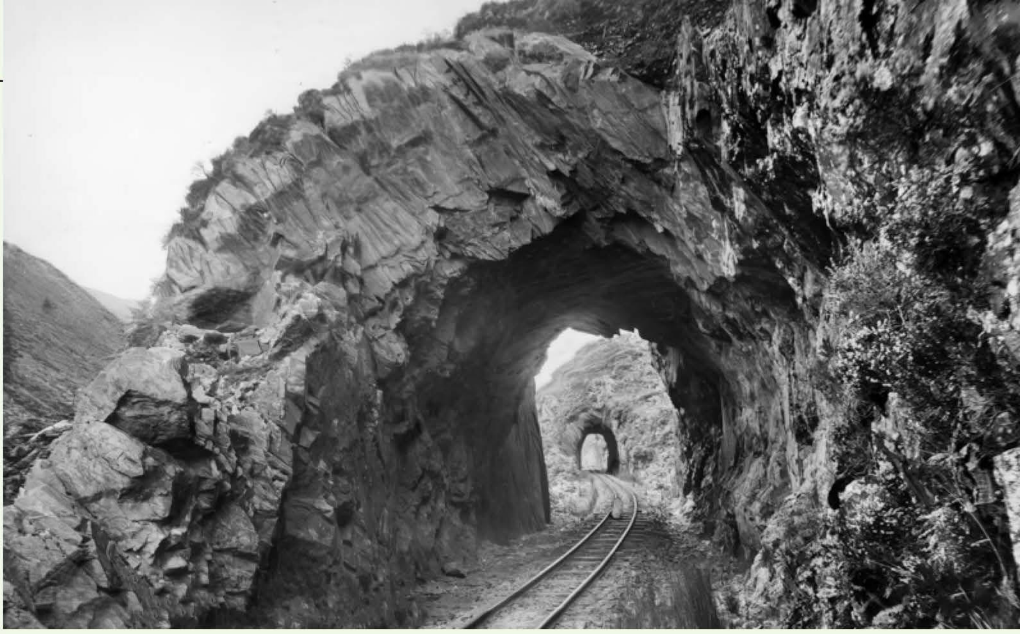
In a 1963 book P. B. Whitehouse wrote: “Perhaps it was the short life of the Welsh Highland which helped to give it such an aura of romance; certainly it must have been a rather wonderful railway...” The WHR was certainly that; but it had a short, disjointed and unsuccessful history. The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway opened from Dinas Junction to South Snowdon in 1878, part of a wildly ambitious scheme for more lines in that area of North Wales; it then went bankrupt in 1879. What duly became the Welsh Highland Railway had extended it to Portmadoc by 1923 but despite being leased by the Festiniog Railway it lost money hand over fist, closing in 1937. The very idea that the WHR could ever be revived and reopened was unthinkable... and yet it has been! These photographs in the **T. J. EDGINGTON COLLECTION** date from its brief life as a ‘working’ railway.

ABOVE: **2-6-2T *Russell* cuts a lonely figure at Beddgelert station. Built for the NWNGR by the Hunslet Engine Co. in 1906, *Russell* went through a colourful career – and survived it. After the WHR and FR were joined at Portmadoc, the matter of the former’s more generous loading gauge had to be addressed and its locomotives be trimmed to fit the latter’s tighter clearances. The unfortunate result with *Russell* can be seen below. It was later sold for industrial use in Oxfordshire and Dorset, then found a home in the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Towyn. In more recent times it has returned to its home ground, been restored to its original configuration and indeed to working order and has even traversed the Welsh Highland once again.**



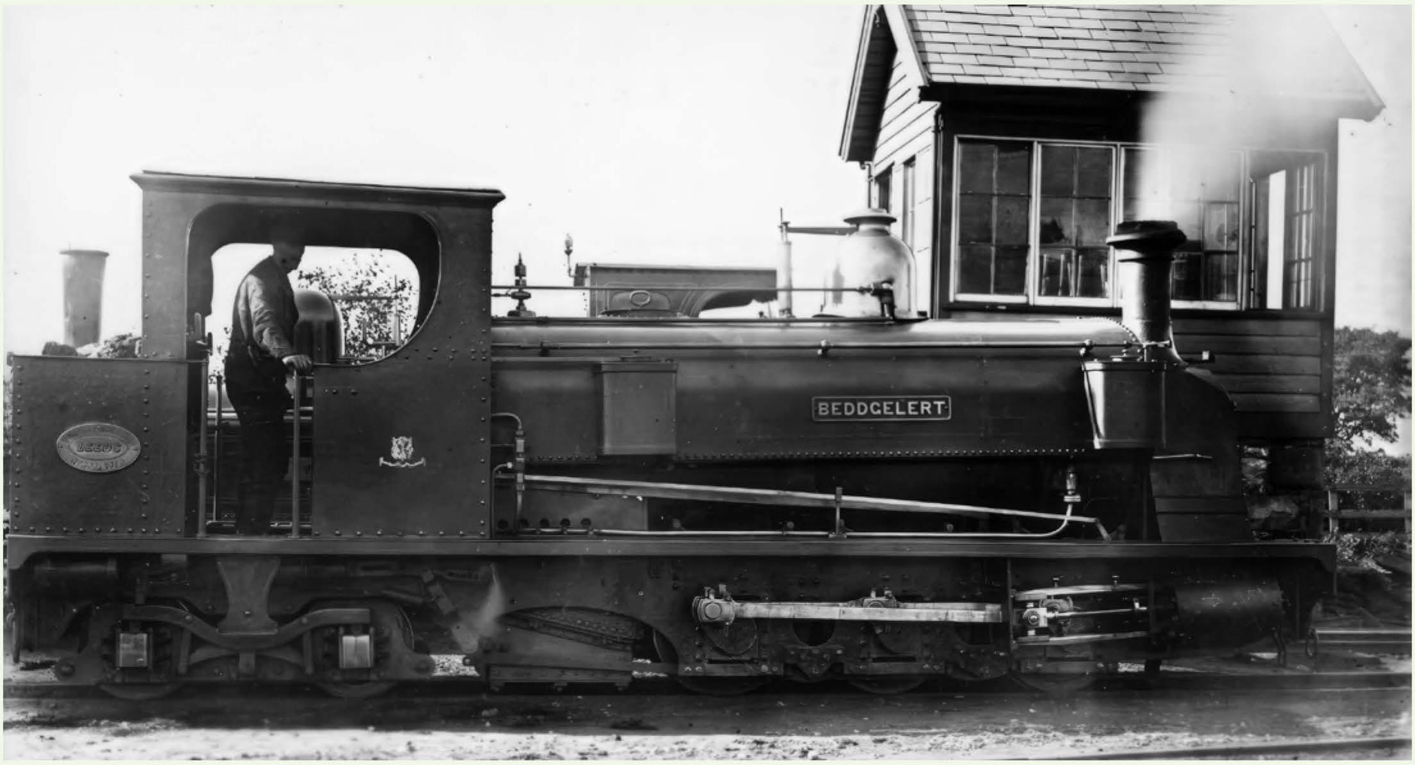
Another scene at Beddgelert, this one in 1935, showing the rather brutal ‘modifications’ to *Russell* – and it *still* didn’t fit the FR! On the left is *Moel Tryfan,* an 0-6-4T Fairlie articulated engine from the Vulcan Foundry in 1878. Passing from the NWNGR to the Welsh Highland, following the closure of the latter it was seized by the FR in 1937 as ‘reparations’ and survived at its Boston Lodge sheds until 1954, by which time its condition had deteriorated so much that the new preservation company regrettably felt it had no option but to scrap it.

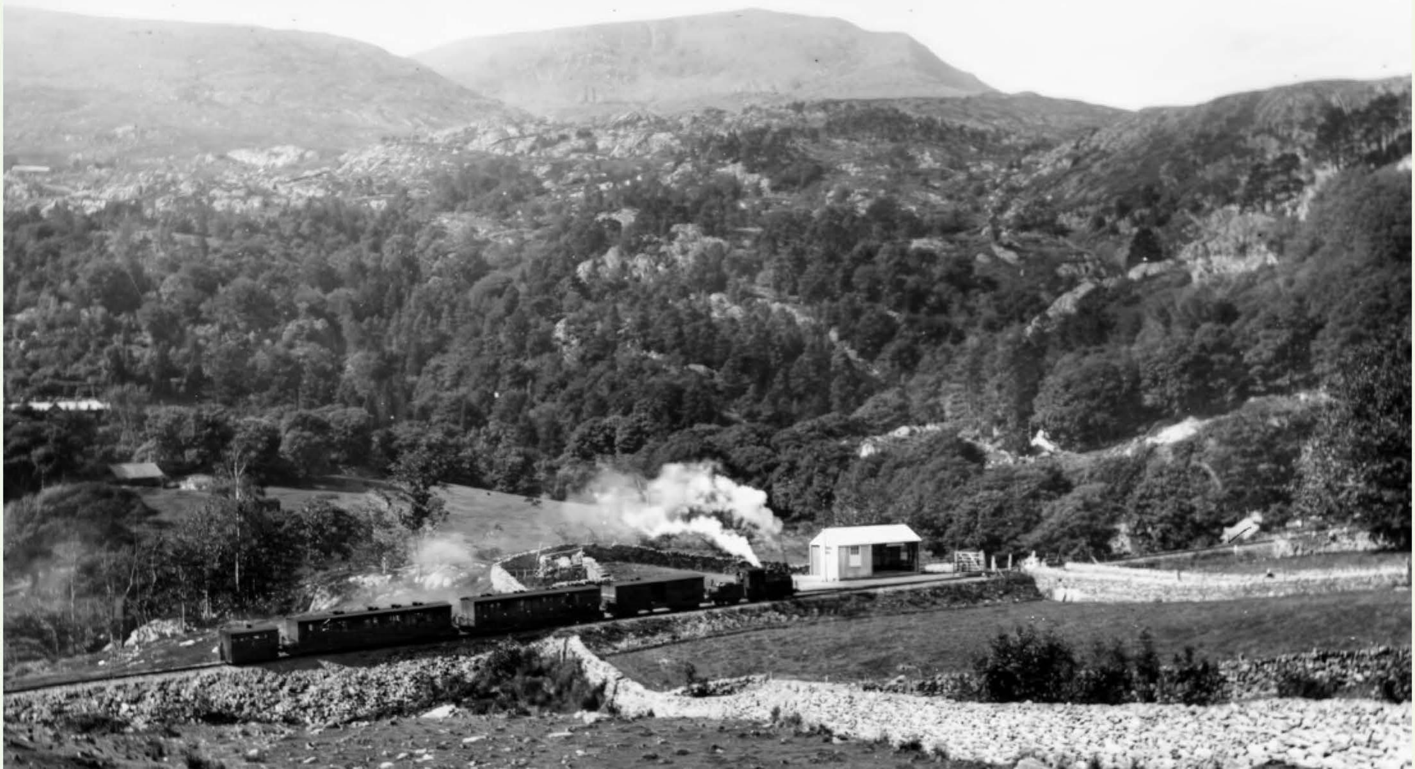
RIGHT: **The tunnels in the Pass of Aberglaslyn – the most spectacular section of the scenic Welsh Highland.**

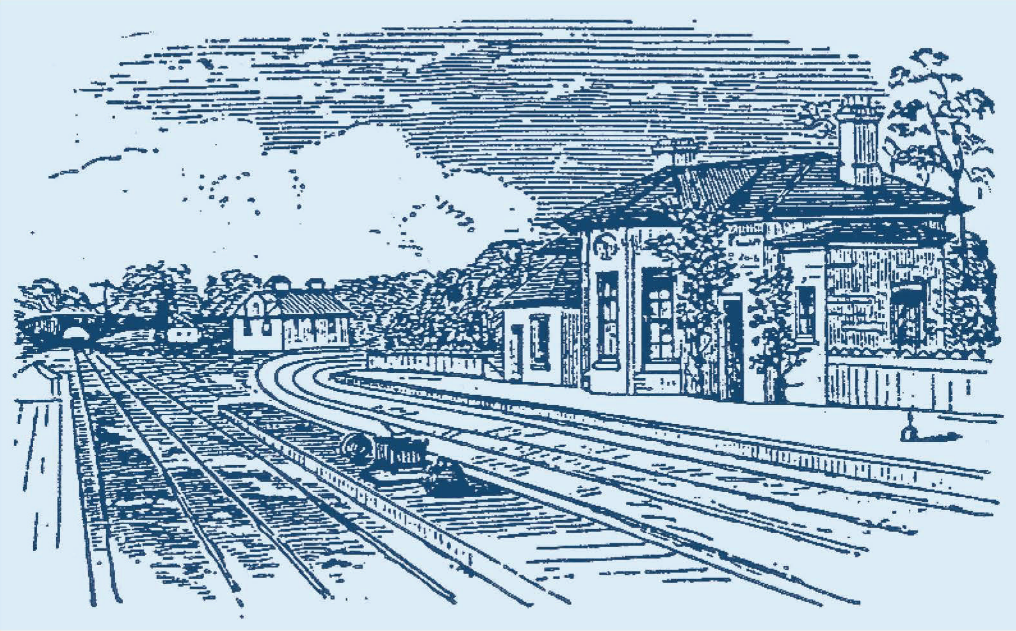


BELOW: **0-6-4T *Beddgelert* arrived on the NWNGR from Hunslet in 1878 and was scrapped c1906. It is standing in front of the signal box at Dinas Junction – the 'junction' was with the London & North Western Railway line from Caernarvon to Afon Wen on the Cambrian. The Dinas station was three miles south of Caernarvon – and therefore local people instead used the new bus as it took them right into the centre of Caernarvon, where they wanted to go.**

BOTTOM: **One of the FR's George England & Co. 0-4-0STs runs into Nantmor station on the way from Portmadoc through the Pass of Aberglaslyn towards Beddgelert. No passengers seem to be waiting – but their absence is made up for by the abundance of scenery! The track of the WHR was lifted for scrap in 1941 – and that, it was thought, was that...**





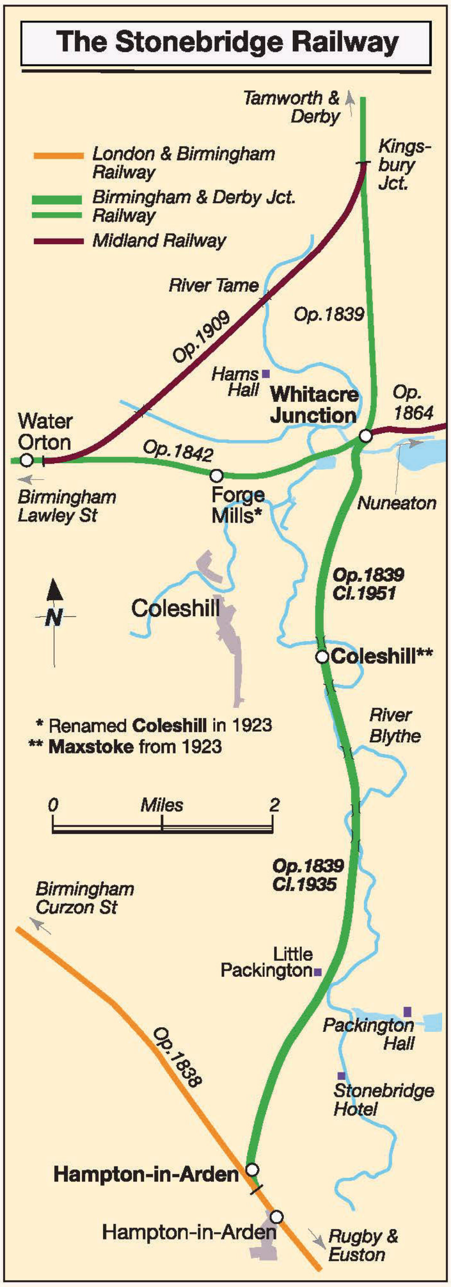


The B&DJR station at Hampton as depicted in the *Illustrated London News*. The two tracks on the left belong to the L&BR. The artist has omitted the connection between the two companies' tracks and has depicted the central island platform as narrower than is shown in photographs. Note the handbell, probably used for announcing the arrival of a train, and the pile of luggage.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE

BY NICHOLAS DAUNT

Despite growing up in central London, my father loved foraging, whether for blackberries, elderberries, sloes, hazel nuts or field mushrooms. Fortunately, he knew enough about the latter to recognise those which were edible and those which were seriously toxic. As we lived on the eastern fringe of Birmingham, there was plenty of open country within easy reach of our home. I remember one occasion when, aged no more than six, I accompanied him on a mushrooming expedition along the old railway line which was crossed by the A45 Birmingham–Coventry road about half a mile to the west of Stonebridge. The latter, a road junction where two former turnpikes crossed, had been of some significance in coaching days and the Stonebridge Hotel figured in many old timetable bills. Today it is just a traffic interchange. At the time to which I refer, the early 1950s, locals still called the old railway the 'Stonebridge Line', or, perhaps, 'that old train line wot yo see when yome gooin' to Coventry on the buzz'. Indeed, the top deck of a Midland Red bus afforded an excellent view of the line. On this occasion, after walking back from the bus stop, we must have scrambled down into the shallow cutting before making our way northwards along the overgrown track. The rails were still in place and I was a little concerned that a train might bear down on us at any moment. In those days, OS maps were not littered with the legend 'dismantled railway' and the idea of walking along a disused line was something quite new to me. We came home with a good haul of mushrooms and I was to remember that experience some years later when I first became seriously interested in railways and their history. I would learn that, for a short period in the early 1840s, this apparent 'branch line' had been part of the main route from London to the North East, before settling down into a long period of deep slumber. At one point during its gestation, it had, indeed, been called the Stonebridge Junction Railway and, having several distinctions, its story is worthy of telling.

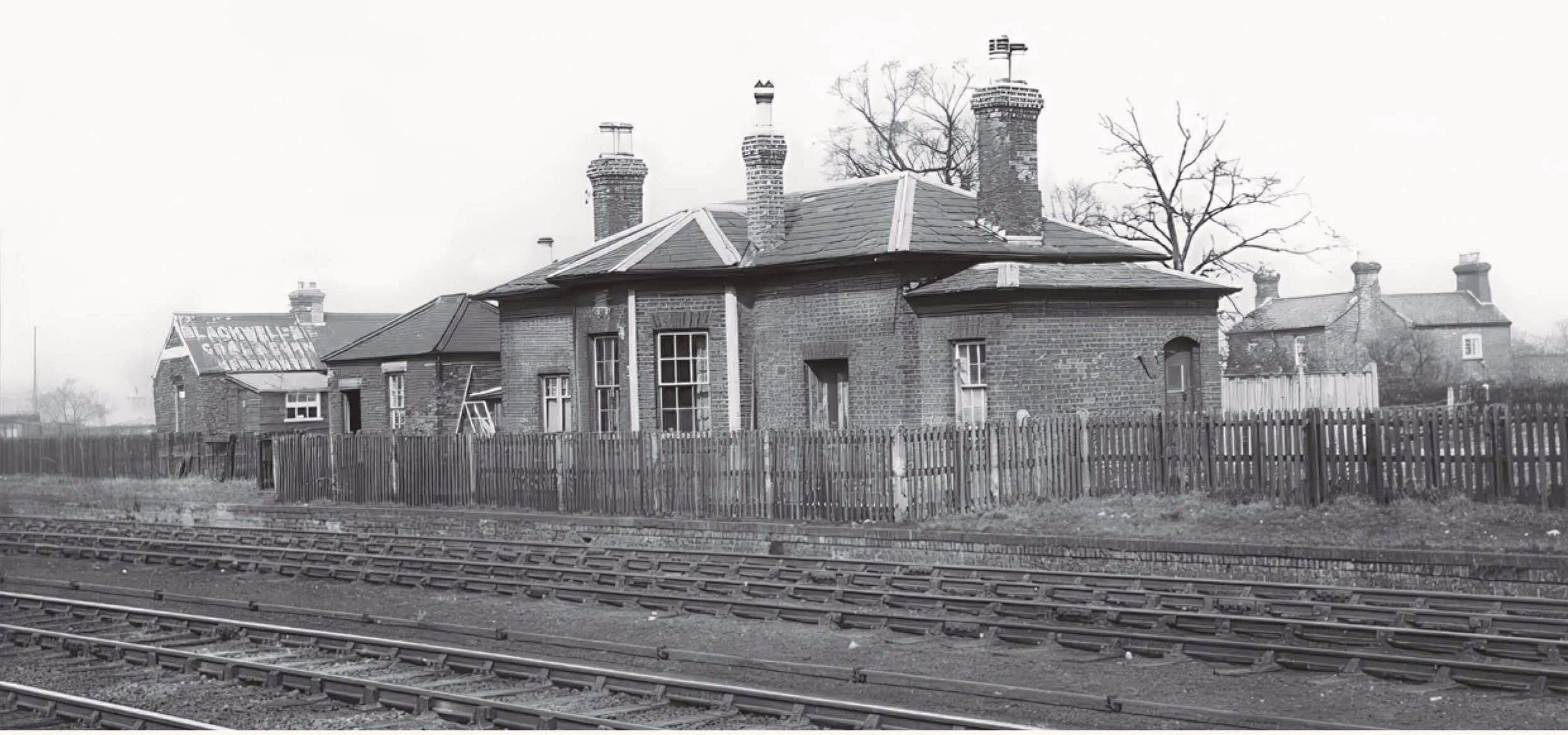


The Stonebridge Railway

That story begins in the early 1830s when, after the spectacular success of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, lines were being feverishly promoted throughout the land. The Birmingham & Derby Railway, passing through Tamworth and Burton-on-Trent, was supported by several leading Birmingham industrialists, as well as Sir Robert Peel, MP for Tamworth and future Prime Minister, and the prominent Burton land-owner, Sir Oswald Moseley Bt. The aim of the project was not just to connect the two towns of the title, but to form a link in an ambitious scheme to connect the South West of England with the North East. At Birmingham it would meet the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway (B&GR) and at Derby the North Midland Railway (NMR), which would continue to Leeds. George Stephenson, who was engineer of the NMR, made the initial survey of the Birmingham & Derby line and was asked to be its consulting engineer. He declined but suggested his son, Robert, then at work with the London & Birmingham (L&BR) . Robert accepted but he soon appointed his close associate, John Cass Birkinshaw, as resident engineer.

By late 1834 it was becoming clear to the promoters of the Birmingham & Derby, that a seven-mile branch from Whitacre to Hampton between Coventry and Birmingham on the L&BR, costing a mere £100,000, would provide a shorter route from London Euston to Derby and points north, which would avoid the need to go via Birmingham. This was added to the specifications of the Bill and the company changed its name to the Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway (B&DJR). Additional stations were proposed at Coleshill on the branch and at the junction with the L&BR at Hampton. Thus was the 'Stonebridge Railway' born.

However, while the B&DJR Bill was being prepared for Parliament, another railway scheme was taking shape in Derby, the Midland Counties Railway (MCR). This planned initially to build a line from Derby to Nottingham but then, approximately halfway between the two, a line southwards from Canfleet near Long Eaton, through Loughborough and Leicester, to meet the L&BR at Rugby. The MCR's engineer was Charles Blacker Vignoles, who was no friend of the Stephensons. Rugby was nearly 23 miles nearer to Euston than was Hampton, so that, quite clearly, the MCR would be able to siphon off London–Derby traffic before it reached the B&DJR. Both companies would have to pay tolls to the L&BR for the use of its track, but the MCR would pay less, thereby saving money as well as journey time. Clearly this was a serious threat to the B&DJR, but there was more. The MCR was planning to continue northwards from Canfleet to meet the NMR at Clay Cross, so that traffic for the

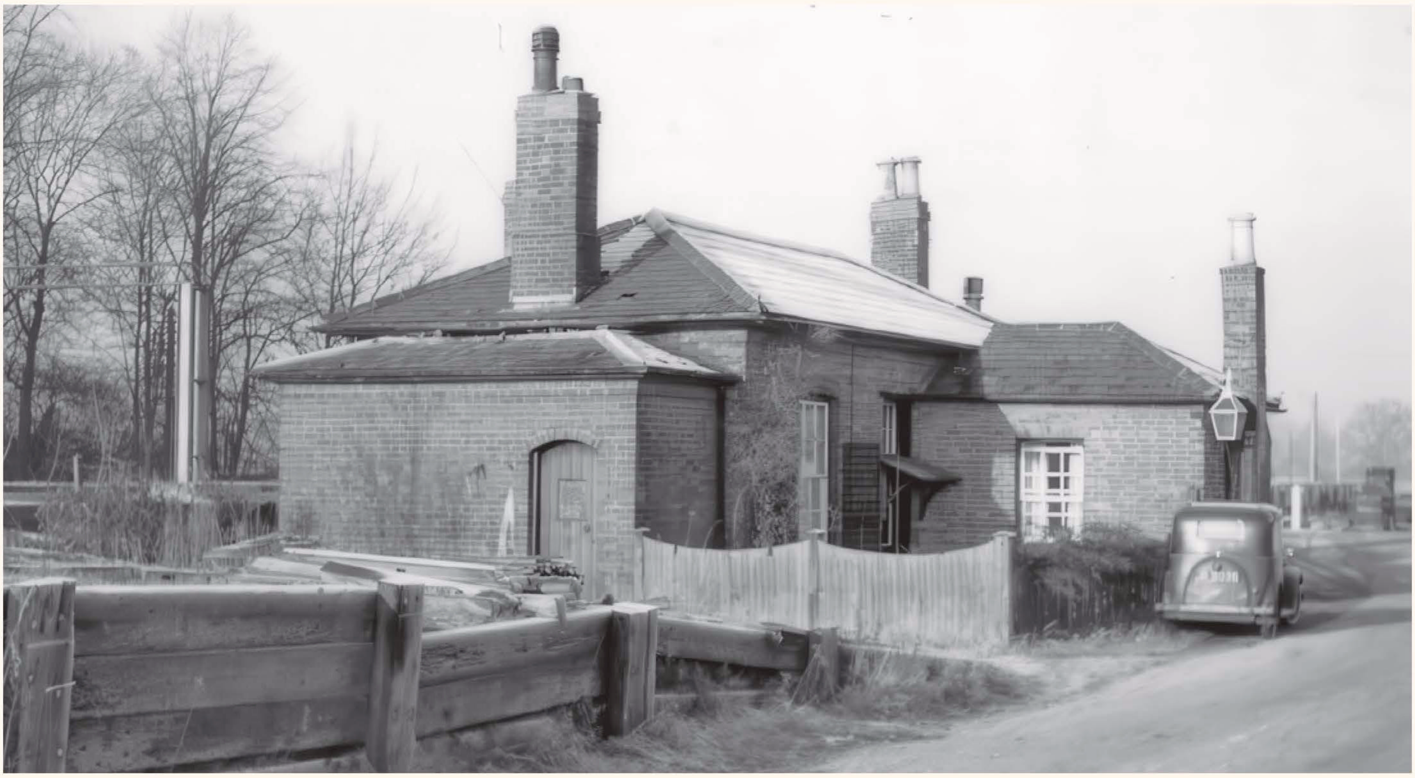


Hampton station seen after the abandonment of the passenger service at the end of 1916. The down platform has been fenced off. Note the prominent sign advertising Blackwells, coal and corn merchants.

North East would bypass Derby and reduce the NMR’s share of receipts. As a counter-move to this, it is thought that it was the NMR which put pressure on the B&DJR to build the Hampton line.

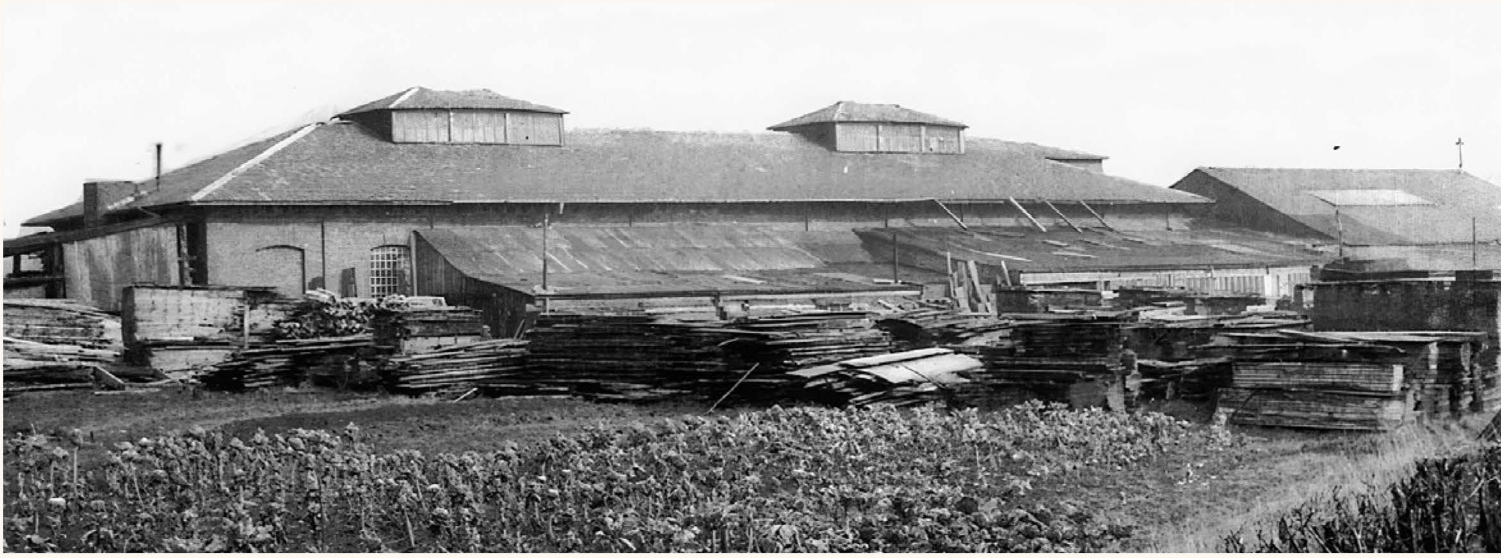
The situation was rapidly getting out of hand, so in December 1835 a meeting of the B&DJR, NMR and MCR was convened in Derby. The MCR agreed to drop its Clay Cross scheme, but in return the B&DJR had to abandon its Hampton branch. Sanity had been restored and all the companies involved received the Royal Assent to their Acts in 1836. Work could begin in building the lines and the B&DJR could revert to its original aim of being part of a SW-NE cross-country route.

Apparently, the B&DJR naively accepted the good faith of the MCR, even though the latter already had something of a reputation for double-dealing. This was borne out when, in 1838, the MCR made a secret agreement with the NMR whereby it would receive preferential treatment in handing over traffic at Derby. When the B&DJR discovered this, it was not a little displeased. It quickly revived the Hampton proposal, bringing a Bill to Parliament for a Stonebridge Junction Railway. The lawyers found a means of combining this with the Act for the B&DJR itself, so that the ‘Stonebridge Railway’ never actually existed as a legal entity.



The frontage of Hampton station in Old Station Road, with the remains of the cattle dock on the left. In the background one of the masts for the electrification of the Euston–Birmingham line can be seen, but the insulated arms and wires have not yet been installed, dating the picture to the mid-1960s.

It was now of the utmost importance that the Hampton line was built as quickly as possible. Even if the line between Whitacre and Birmingham was finished, the impecunious B&GR was hopelessly behind in completing its route (it did include the infamous Lickey Bank), so there was no hope of lucrative SW-NE traffic in the immediate future. The B&DJR desperately needed income. The MCR was currently hampered by legal difficulties and unlikely to complete for some time, so there was an opportunity for the B&DJR to establish itself as the route for London traffic. The directors must have known that, ultimately, they could not compete with the MCR but, at least, they would have some cash



A view of the imposing 1839 engine shed at Hampton, taken 20th May 1954 when the building was in use by Blackwells as a saw mill. Matthew Kirtley was in charge of this shed when the line opened. Note the vegetable garden, possibly a remnant of the wartime 'Dig for Victory' campaign. (R. S. Carpenter)

coming in until the Gloucester route was open. Reaching Birmingham could wait.

Work began at the Derby end of the line, where heavier earthworks were expected, but by the end of 1837 the line had reached Tamworth. At the beginning of 1838 excavations started on the Whitacre–Hampton section, which was expected to be completed more quickly. The original course of the line, as specified in the Act, passed closer to Stonebridge, reaching the L&BR further to the east than the eventual Hampton station. However, the junction with the L&BR would have been difficult, being on a long incline, and the Earl of Aylesford, the owner of Packington Park, had belatedly realised that the line would pass rather close to his house. He, therefore, offered to pay the costs of an amending Act of Parliament altering the route, which was passed on 27th July 1838. This deviation, surveyed by Charles Liddell, was a much better option. As well as Packington Hall, a large Palladian building dating in its present form from 1772, the line passed close to the fourteenth century Maxstoke Castle and the associated Augustinian Priory, the home of the Fetherston-Dilkes family. It was clearly important that the company maintained good relations with its aristocratic neighbours and there would be occasions when visitors to these stately homes generated welcome traffic.

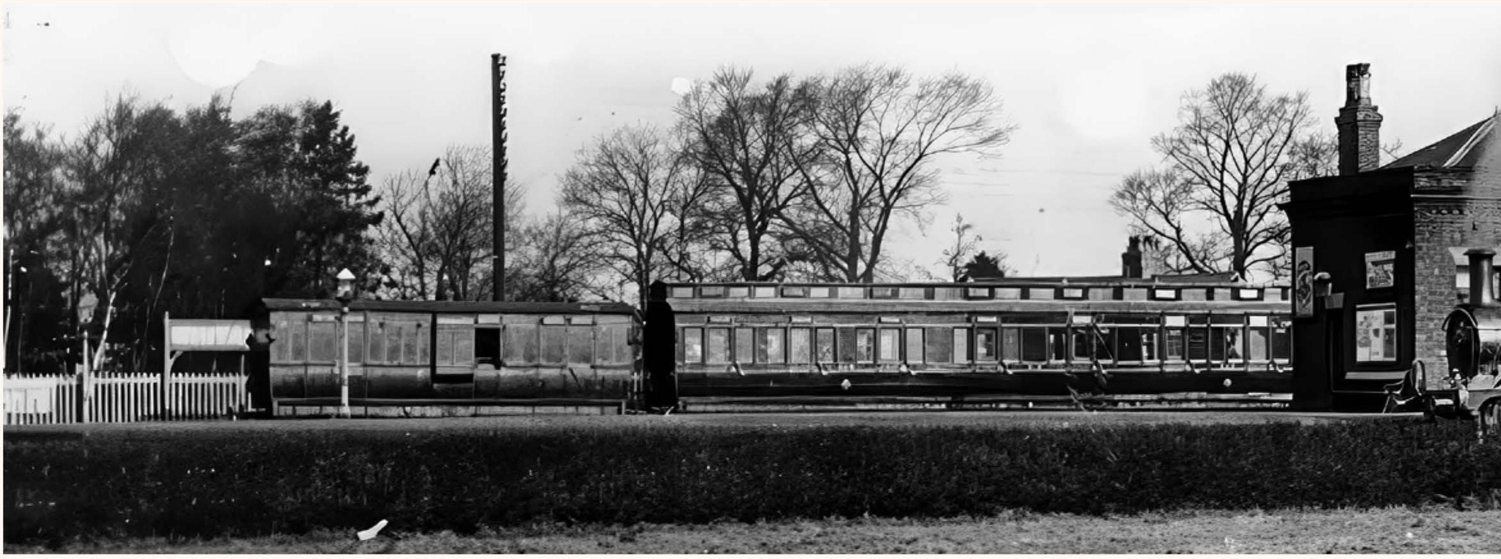
Although the line traversed generally flat terrain, there were some cuttings and embankments, but the spoil excavated from the former could be used to build up the latter. The course of the River Blythe was followed, necessitating six crossings. Five of these bridges were built of timber. The bridge near Castle farm had stone supporting piers. There was one girder bridge over a dead arm of the river where it had been diverted. Near Whitacre there was a bridge over the smaller River Bourne. At one point in Packington Park, the Blythe was diverted, resulting in the loss of an established estate bridge. To compensate, the company built an impressive girder bridge which, while never having carried a train, was maintained by the B&DJR, the Midland and the L&MSR until 1947.

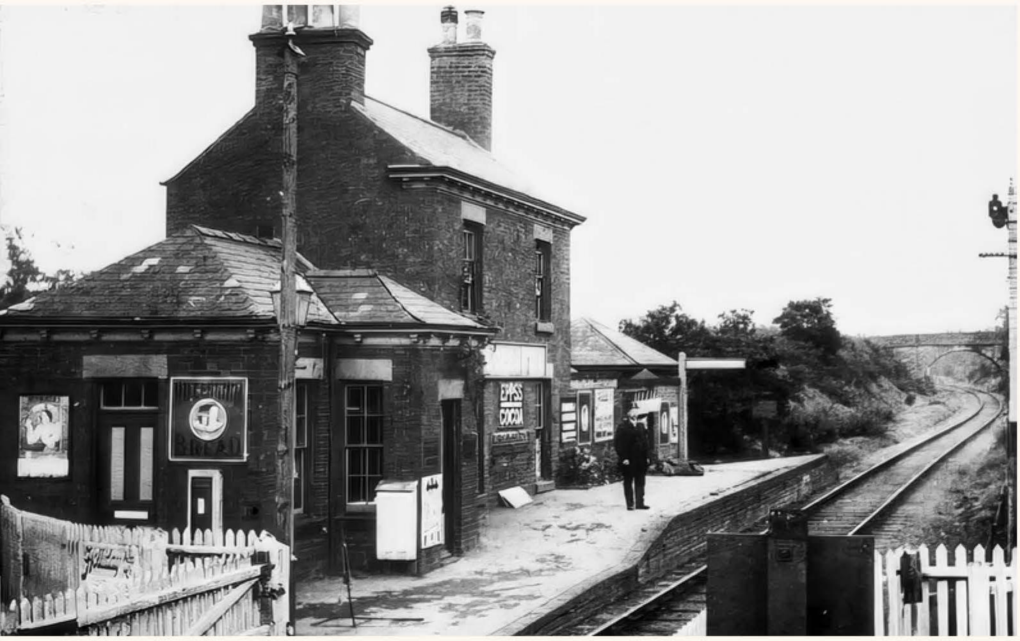
Of the two stations on the branch, Hampton (called Hampton Derby Junction 1839-49, Hampton Junction 1849-72, thereafter Hampton) was naturally more important, being designated as first class and at the junction with the L&BR. In appearance it is somewhat similar to the toll-houses found on the turnpike roads. It is of one storey, built of brick with an attractive bay window with inset stone quoin-strips on the platform side. The L&BR had already built a station at this site, one of the original three between Rugby and Birmingham when the line opened in 1838. This had a platform on the down side, but when the B&DJR arrived on the scene, a wide island platform was built on the L&BR's up side, the other face of which was used by the B&DJR for its up traffic (to Derby). The B&DJR down trains used the platform immediately in front of the station building.

It is at Hampton that we find the first of the distinctions of the Stonebridge Railway to which I have alluded. When the line opened, the first 'station clerk' (ie station master) was James Allport, born in 1811, the son of a Birmingham gun manufacturer. He would go on to be one of the greatest railway managers of the nineteenth century. General Manager of the Midland Railway from 1853 until 1880, he was knighted in 1884 and died in 1892. His two greatest monuments are the Settle and Carlisle railway and St. Pancras station.

At Hampton a substantial two-road engine shed was provided to house just four locomotives. It is thought that, in the

Johnson 0-6-0 No.2641 (built Kitson & Co. 1901) stands at Whitacre Junction station with the single six-wheel coach which forms the one train per day to Hampton and back, departing at 8.10am and arriving back at 8.55.





The original Coleshill station, looking towards Hampton, with the station master in attendance, taken about 1908. In 1923 the station would be renamed Maxstoke. Forge Mills, on the Whitacre–Birmingham line, would become Coleshill. The crossing gates can be seen in the foreground. Note the plethora of enamel advertisements. (R. S. Carpenter)

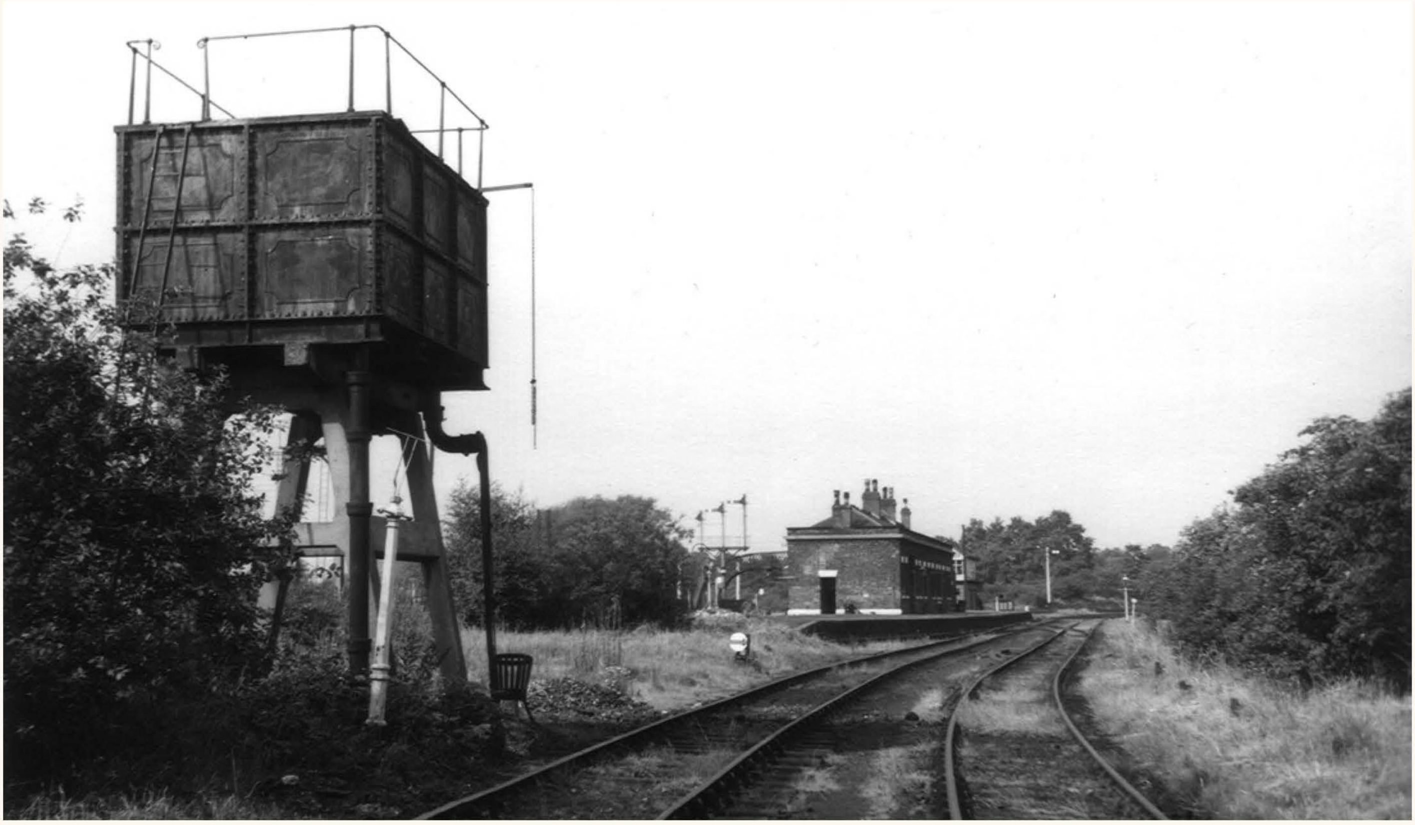
early days, the building also had locomotive repair facilities. In charge of the locomotive shed at Hampton was one Matthew Kirtley, another of the line's distinctions. Like so many early enginemen, he came from the North East, having been born at Tanfield, Country Durham, in 1813. He was trained on the Stockton & Darlington under Timothy Hackworth, and was a driver on the Liverpool & Manchester and Hull & Selby Railways, before joining the L&BR. He is reputed to have driven the first train from Birmingham to Euston. On the B&DJR he was soon promoted, becoming Locomotive Superintendent for the whole line. When the Midland Railway was formed in 1844, he became its Locomotive Superintendent, a position he held until his death in 1873. While in charge, he expanded and re-equipped Derby Locomotive Works, which began building engines in 1851. His most important contribution to locomotive development was the fitting of a brick arch and deflector plate to fireboxes, enabling them to burn coal instead of coke. He provided the Midland with large numbers of simple but reliable, generally double-framed, engines, mostly of the 0-6-0 and 2-4-0 wheel arrangements. Some of these survived long enough to be taken into the stock of British Railways. While they were working at Hampton, Messrs. Allport and Kirtley, together with their families, shared a substantial nearby residence, Vale House, which still exists.

The other station on the line, Coleshill, was designated as second class. It was built by William Mammatt for the princely sum of £267. It consisted of one short platform with a single-storey booking hall and waiting room. Alongside this was a two-storey building which included accommodation for the station master and his family. He also acted as keeper for the adjacent Maxstoke Lane crossing. In 1883 a siding was installed. This was worked by a ground frame and it would be used by the coal merchants Rollasons for over a century. In 1923, just after the grouping, Coleshill station was renamed Maxstoke, while Forge Mills, on the 1842 Whitacre to Birmingham line, became Coleshill. No passenger trains ever called at Maxstoke station and it was finally demolished in 1962. There was no station at Whitacre until the Birmingham line was opened in 1842 and Whitacre became a junction.

There was another crossing near Blythe Hall, where the western entrance to Maxstoke Castle crossed the line. Here the keeper lived in some style in a two-storey turreted Neo-Gothic house called Maxstoke Lodge. Throughout its existence, signalling on the line was rather alarming. To begin with, like all railways, signals, points and crossing gates were operated by 'policemen' working on the time interval system. Later, when other railways had introduced the block telegraph system with full interlocking of signals and points, on the Stonebridge line, although there were home and distant signals at Coleshill and Hampton worked by frames, there was no telegraphic or telephone communication between them. As Roger Waring writes, "the first knowledge that anyone at the stations had of any impending arrival was the engine's whistle and actual sight of the train."

By early 1839 Birkinshaw reported that the line was approaching completion but, as always seems to have been the case, opening was delayed by heavy rains. On 29th May a special train made an examination of the whole route and on 15th July Robert Stephenson drove the locomotive *Derby,* a Mather, Dixon 2-2-2, from Birmingham to Derby and back. This involved running over the L&BR from Birmingham Curzon Street to Hampton, where it was necessary to reverse on to the B&DJR line. On 17th of that month the Board of Trade inspector gave the line a satisfactory report and on 5th August it was officially opened, with all the usual junketing. The following Monday, 12th August, it was opened to the public. For a short time, the B&DJR would be the only way of travelling by rail from London to Derby and beyond.

Like most railway companies in those early days, the B&DJR, having no locomotive building facilities of its own, was dependent on outside builders for its motive power. The company began life with twelve passenger engines of the 2-2-2 wheel arrangement. These were considered stabler when running than the diminutive four-wheelers favoured by the L&BR. They were supplied by four companies, three locomotives from each, namely Mather, Dixon & Co. of Liverpool, Tayleur & Co. of Newton-le-Willows (later to become the Vulcan



Looking towards Whitacre Junction from the Hampton branch on 30th June 1959. The semaphore signals to the left of the station building control the junction of the Derby and Leicester lines. The water tank is still in use because there is a brazier protecting the 'bag'. (D. J. Norton)

Foundry), Sharps and Co. of Manchester and R. & W. Hawthorn & Co. of Newcastle. Whereas most companies at that time quarried Greco-Roman mythology for their engine names, the B&DJR had a geographical theme, their locomotives being named after towns, villages (including Hampton) and rivers along the line. There is, of course, something of a risk in this, as intending passengers might mistake the name of the engine for the destination of the train! It does not seem to have been a problem in this case. In 1841 two 0-4-2 freight engines, named after villages, were supplied by Thompson and Cole of Bolton. Quite clearly, the company's preference was for passenger traffic. In later years the Derby to Birmingham line would carry a prodigious amount of freight, especially coal from Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, bound for Birmingham and the West Country.

As was usual at that time, passenger coaches closely resembled horse-drawn vehicles. First class coaches were yellow, second class blue and third class dark brown. Through coaches for the London service were painted buff and black. Unusually, second class vehicles were enclosed and third class at least had a roof. The Midland Railway, part of which the B&DJR would eventually become, had a reputation for providing more comfortable coaches than other companies, something which we can, perhaps, glimpse at this early stage. Freight wagons were very basic.

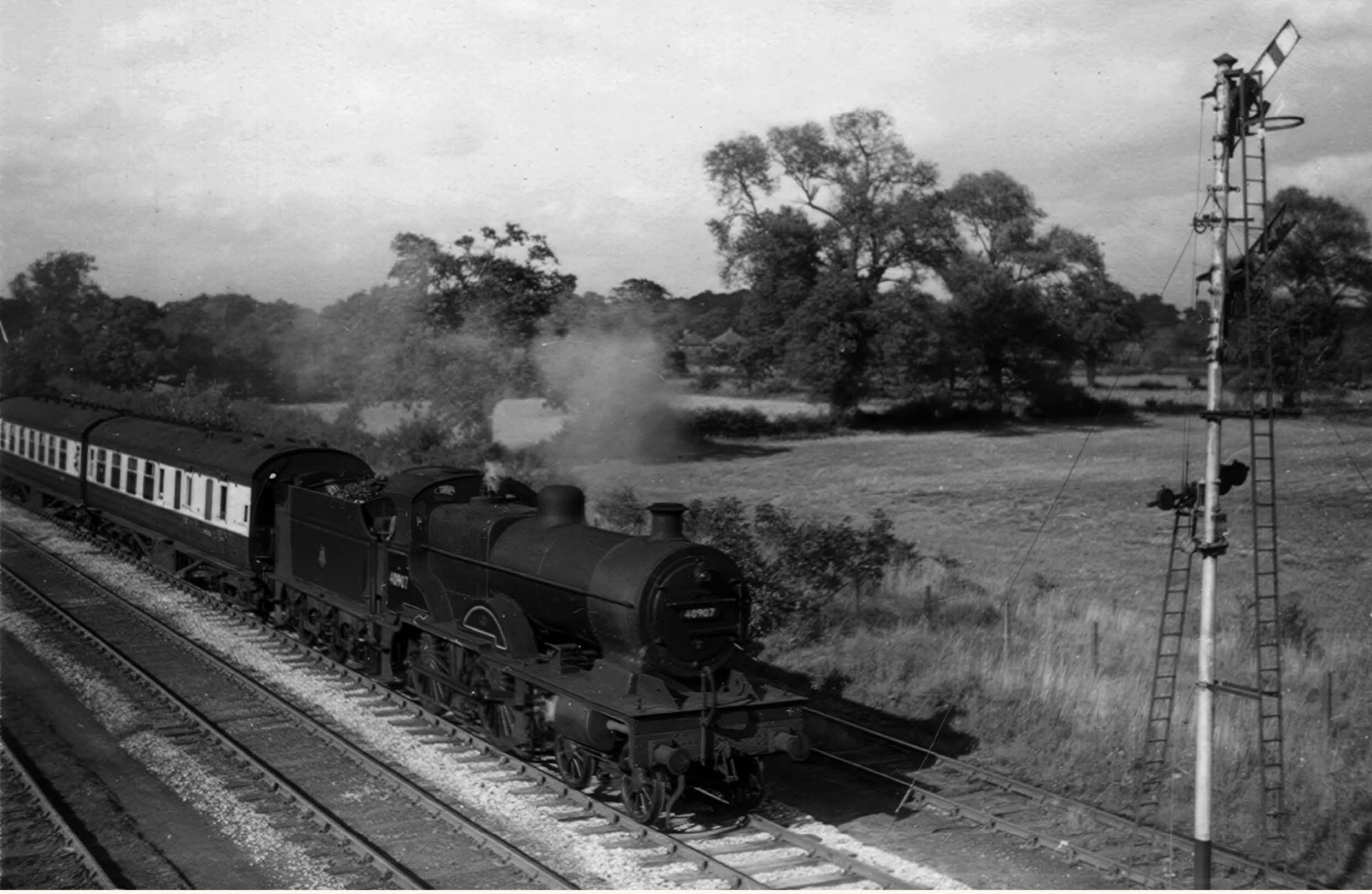
The initial service of 1839 consisted of three trains either way between Hampton and Derby, of which two connected with London. On Sundays there were two trains. By 1840 this had been increased to five, with three on Sundays. Each train included two vehicles for the through London service. The journey between London and Derby took 6¾ hours. In the 1841 timetable, the 10.50am train from Hampton to Derby averaged 23.1mph, which was then the fastest scheduled run on the standard gauge in the country. This was another of the line's distinctions, although the B&DJR could not compete with Gooch's broad gauge singles on the Great Western in terms of speed. Because the junction at Hampton faced London and reversal was necessary there, trains between Birmingham and Derby took two hours, providing a strong incentive to complete the direct Whitacre–Birmingham section as quickly as possible. The B&DJR engines were too big for the L&B's turntable at Curzon Street, so the latter withdrew its permission for them to travel on its line. Henceforth all trains on the L&BR were hauled by L&BR engines. Of course, trains leaving Euston were at this time rope-worked as far as Camden.

Another distinction was achieved by the line when, on 28th November 1843, it played host to Queen Victoria, who was making her first ever rail journey on the standard gauge. All her previous journeys had been on the Great Western. She and her husband, Prince Albert, were visiting Sir Robert Peel at his home at Drayton Manor near Tamworth. Her train was hauled from Watford by one of the L&BR's Bury engines, Number 20, to Hampton, where the Mather Dixon engine *Burton* took over, driven by Matthew Kirtley himself. The Queen noted in her Journal that. "everything was extremely well managed on the railroad, & the train goes along very easily, though not quite so fast as the Gt. Western." This was, remember, the monarch who until her death in 1901 refused to allow trains carrying her to exceed 40mph! On this occasion, the Queen's train was followed by one conveying the Dowager Queen Adelaide and the Duke of Wellington. Over the years there would be other royal visits to the Stonebridge line.

The nearest the Whitacre–Hampton line came to having a 'golden age' was the period from its opening in August 1839 to 1st July 1840, a remarkably short period and, it must be said, 'gold' was in remarkably short supply. The company had to pay crippling tolls to the L&BR for the right to run trains on the latter's line between Birmingham and Hampton. The first class fare was three shillings of which exactly half, 1s 6d, went to the L&BR. The toll on Burton ale from Hampton to London was 4s per ton. Up to 1841 the B&DJR's average weekly receipts were in the region of £750, of which £160 was paid in tolls. The receipts at Hampton were meagre, to say the least; that young station clerk, James Allport, recorded £9 0s 7. for 14th November 1840 and £2 4s 7d for the following day. With so much of the receipts going in tolls, this was unsustainable. At least, there was some relief when, on 10th February 1842, the direct line from Whitacre to Birmingham Lawley Street was completed. Of course, this marked the end for Birmingham traffic on the branch, although trains to and from London still operated over it.

For a relatively short railway (48½ route miles), the B&DJR was grossly overstaffed, with 219 employees and a total wages bill in 1842 of £14,716. The company could not continue paying that amount and had to impose a wages cut. A measure of an efficiently run concern is the percentage of income which is swallowed up by working expenses. In 1840 for the B&DJR the figure was 74.2%, compared with 37.4% for the L&BR.

1st July 1840 should have been a glorious day for the B&DJR, for it was then that the North Midland opened its line from Derby to Leeds and beyond. Traffic from the south would be handed over to the York & North

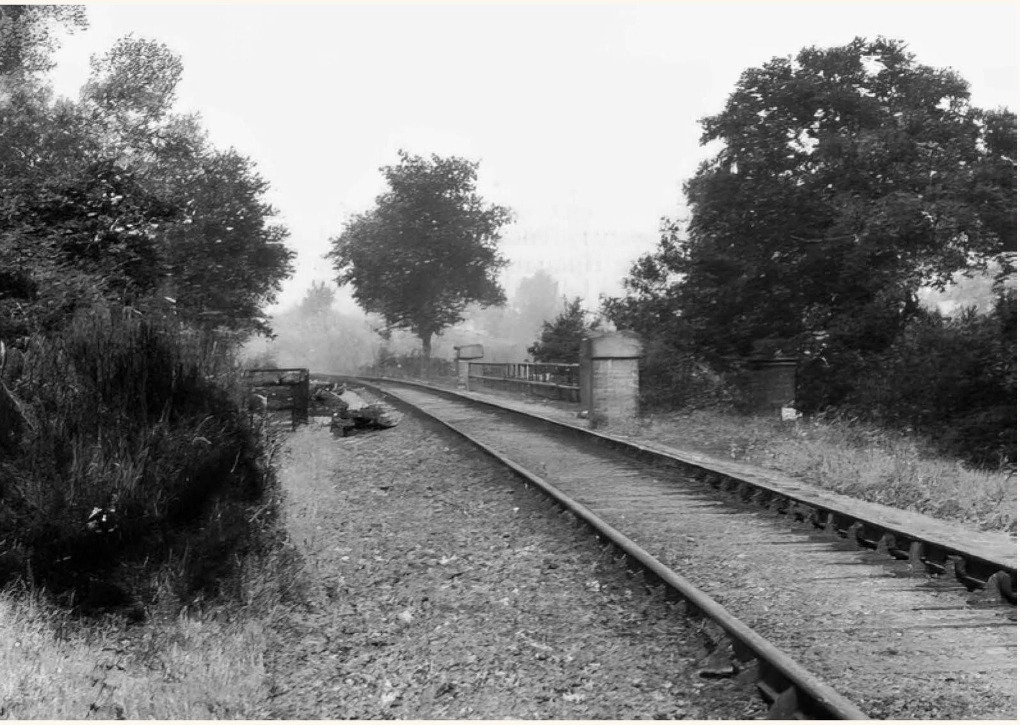


LMS Compound 4-4-0 No 40907 approaches Whitacre Junction station with a Derby–Birmingham local on 1st September 1952. The photograph was taken from a road bridge to the north of the station, where the up and down goods lines are on either side of the main lines. The locomotive, allocated to Derby at this time, was a frequent performer on this route. (D. J. Norton)

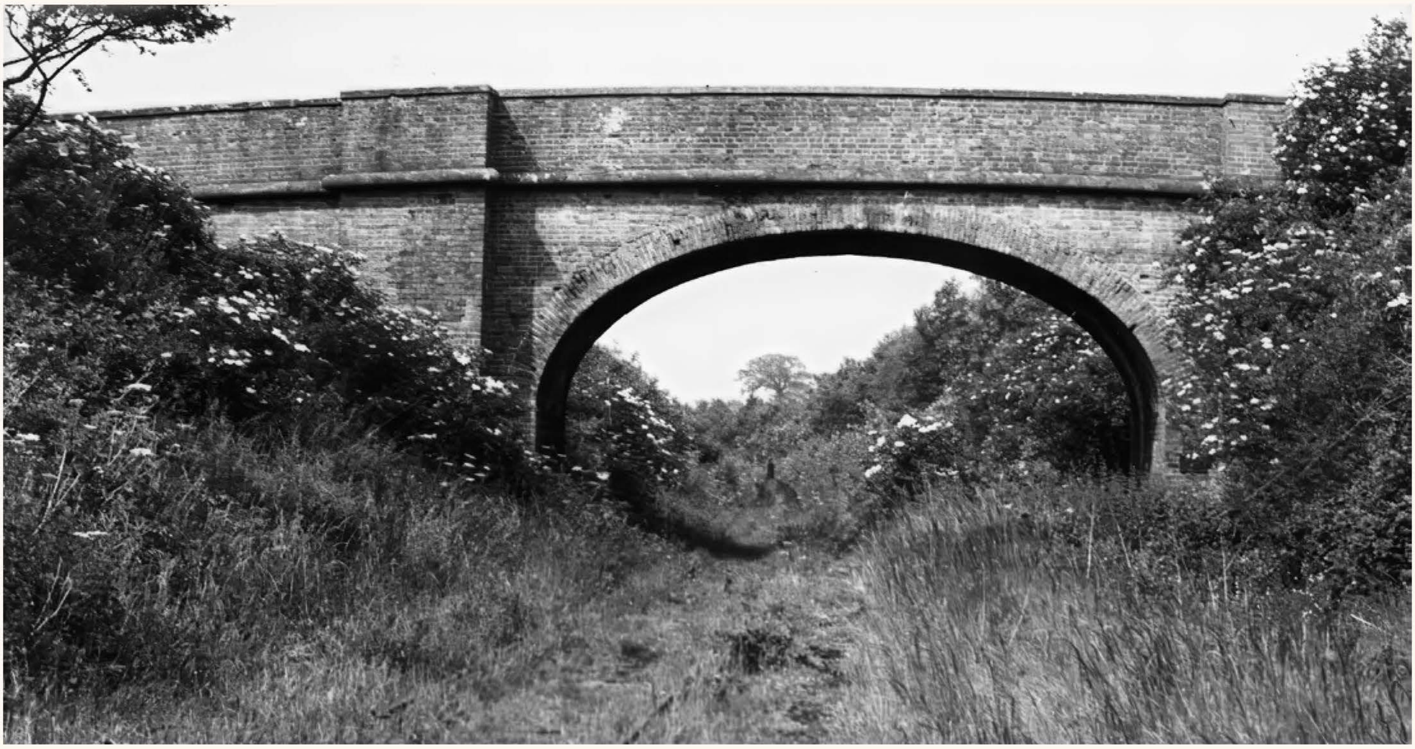
Midland Railway at Normanton. The great SW-NE cross-country route, as a part of which the B&DJR had originally been promoted, was becoming a reality. However, on that same day the MCR opened its line from Rugby to Derby via Leicester, providing a route from London to the north some eleven miles shorter than that via Hampton. It might be thought that the B&DJR would have withdrawn from the London traffic in order to concentrate on what it was in a position to do successfully. The Birmingham & Gloucester had almost reached Birmingham and it would only be a short time before it could link up with the B&DJR.

But no, the B&DJR was determined to fight on, trying to persuade its shareholders that, whereas the MCR depended on the London traffic, for the B&DJR it was a welcome bonus. Few of them would have been fooled. The inevitable result of this pig-headedness was that the next few years were taken up with endless legal wrangles, particularly about the NMR's alleged bias towards the MCR, and a destructive price war which came close to ruining all three Derby-based companies. Roger Waring provides details of some of the idiocies which this involved; I will pinpoint just two. When it opened in 1839, the B&DJR was charging £1 15s for a first class ticket between London and Derby. Once the MCR arrived on the scene, this fluctuated between £1 8s. and £1 10s. Given the tight margin with which the B&DJR was operating, this cut was unsustainable. Secondly, the MCR was fond of offering what we might call 'special bargains', which foreshadow some of the ticket pricing oddities of today's railways. It was possible to travel from Derby to Coventry via Leicester and Rugby for 5s whereas the normal fare from Derby to Leicester was 7s, but when passengers for Leicester bought tickets to Coventry they were prevented from alighting at their preferred destination by company officials!

Bridge No.16 looking towards Whitacre in 1920. It was the failure of this bridge in 1935 which led to the end of the line as a through route. (R. S. Carpenter)



During the period 1840-1844 the B&DJR's dividend averaged 1.6%. The figure for the MCR was 2.75% and the NMR 3.5%. By contrast, the L&BR was paying 10%. The shareholders of the three companies, a significant number of whom held shares in all three, had had enough. There



Bridge No.18 on 19th June 1948. The rails are still in place but very overgrown, just as the author remembers this section of the line. (T. J. Edgington, courtesy of R. S. Carpenter)

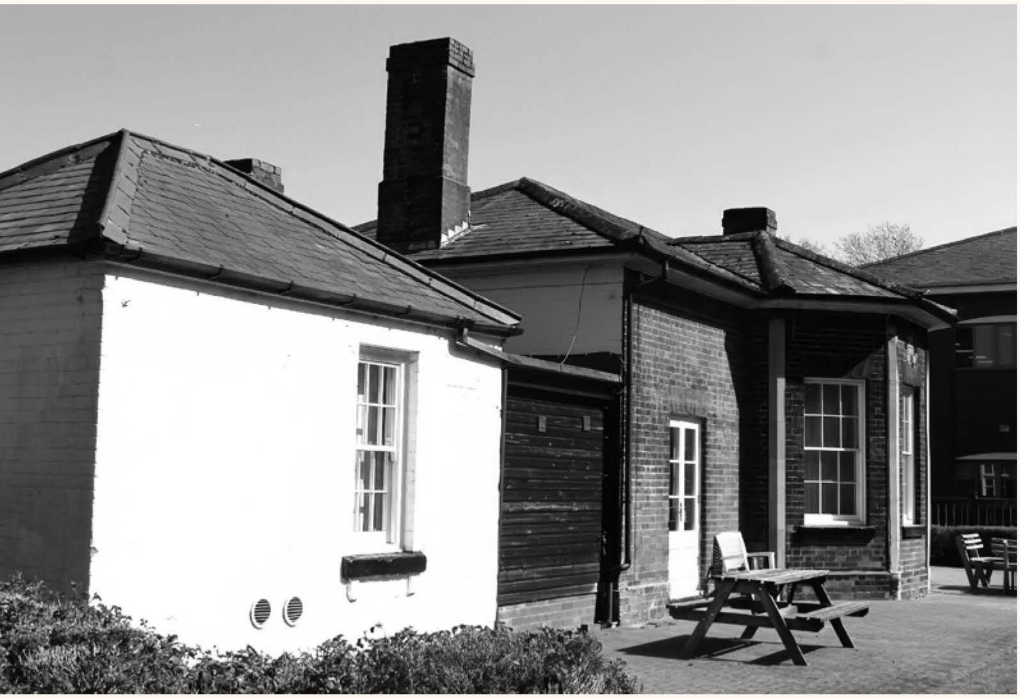
was talk of the L&BR taking over, at least, the MCR and the B&DJR, but in the end it was the 'Railway King', George Hudson himself, who brought about an amalgamation of the B&DJR, MCR and NMR to form the Midland Railway (MR) on 10th May 1844. Hudson was already Chairman of the York & North Midland and for the next five years the MR would be part of his empire. The Midland would go on to be one of the largest and most powerful pre-grouping companies in Britain, having, despite its name, interests in all four nations of the Union.

On 3rd August 1846 the MR acquired the Birmingham & Gloucester and the Bristol & Gloucester Railways. Hudson's standard gauge empire now extended from York to Bristol. The full benefit of the creation of this route would not be felt until New Street station was opened in 1854 and the Birmingham and West Suburban line was completed in 1876, allowing trains on the SW-NE route to enter at one end of the station and depart at the other, without reversal. In the mid-1840s railway amalgamations were in vogue. In 1846 the L&BR combined with the Grand Junction and Manchester & Birmingham Railways to form the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) and a little later in 1854, the York & North Midland became part of the North Eastern Railway (NER).

The Midland, now having just one effective link with the LNWR at Rugby, became part of what was known as the Euston Square Confederacy. This may surprise readers who are familiar with the narrative of deadly rivalry between Euston and Derby, but it should be remembered that in 1853 the MR and LNWR would have amalgamated had not Parliament, fearful of monopolies, thrown out the proposal. In time, the MR would achieve its own independent route to London, first via the Great Northern Railway from Hitchen to King's Cross, but in 1868 with a completely independent line to its monumental St. Pancras station. The Rugby–Leicester line was reduced to purely local status. For the Whitacre to Hampton line the formation of the MR was the beginning of the end, as it no longer had any significant role. Its death throes would be protracted, lasting well over a century. They began even before 1844, curiously with the last and saddest of the line's distinctions. Between August 1842 and March 1843 one line of track was removed, making it the first double track main line railway to be singled in the country, and quite possibly in the world.

When the direct line to Birmingham opened in 1842, a station was provided at Whitacre for the first time. On 1st November 1864 the Midland opened a line to Nuneaton (and to Leicester, partly over LNWR metals) from a point on the Birmingham–Derby route, ¾-mile south of Whitacre station. Here a new station, named Whitacre Junction, was built. The 'Junction' denomination referred to the divergence of the Derby and Leicester lines, and had nothing to do with the hapless Hampton line, which was now connected to the new station by a spur. There were quite extensive sidings at Whitacre Junction, mainly to deal with coal traffic coming from Kingsbury and collieries on the Leicester line. It was even thought necessary to provide two signal boxes. It appears that the old Whitacre station was in use until 1877. A note in the Working Timetable of that year says: "The Hampton Engine must take Traffic from the New to the Old Whitacre Station at 10:20

The B&DJR station at Hampton, seen on 10th April 2025, is a Grade II listed building and is used as the offices of BA Mobile Fleet Services. The paved area corresponds to the down platform. (Author)



am & 2:30 pm. No.5 Train waits for Burton Goods when required". The old station was demolished soon after this.

At Whitacre the Derby line turned sharply through almost 90 degrees northwards but in 1909 a cut-off was opened from Water Orton, closer to Birmingham, to just south of Kingsbury, forming the hypotenuse of the triangle. From now on, express trains would bypass Forge Mills/Coleshill and Whitacre completely. The Hampton line, once part of a major route to the north, was now a branch off a loop, itself only used by freight and local passenger trains.

Following the singling of the Hampton line, the passenger service continued with four or five trains in both directions, two of them conveying Euston through coaches until 1845. After that, the service was purely local, sometimes with goods wagons attached to the passenger trains. Anyone wishing to travel from, say, Coleshill to London would have to change at Hampton, but on 1st September 1884 the LNWR opened a new station at Hampton (called Hampton-in-Arden from July 1886), some 500 yards nearer to Euston, so that our intending passenger was faced with an invigorating walk along the aptly named Old Station Road. However, there is a well-known photograph of the old station which shows a Kirtley 0-6-0 standing at the MR down platform while an LNWR DX 0-6-0 is at the MR up platform. Roger Waring dates this to c1875, but the LNWR station canopy can clearly be seen on the left. This is a typical example of the mass-produced timber buildings favoured by the LNWR from the later 1880s and exemplified by the nearby Marston Green station. It has been suggested that, even after the opening of its new station, the LNWR retained the old one, even adding a new canopy, for purely contractual reasons to do with the original legislation under which the B&DJR was built.

In May 1877 the passenger timetable was cut to one train a day, usually consisting of a single coach hauled by an 0-6-0 Kirtley or Johnson locomotive, perhaps with a few wagons attached. The 1916 timetable shows the train leaving Whitacre at 8.0 am and arriving back 55 minutes later. For the remaining 23 hours and 5 minutes each day, the coach lay idle, while the locomotive would work the one or two branch freights, as required. When the passenger service between Whitacre and Hampton was quietly withdrawn on New Year's Eve 1916, very few people would have noticed.

The engine shed at Hampton was no longer used after 1842 (locomotives on the branch were provided by Saltley shed in Birmingham and overhauled at Derby) and in 1884 the building was let to a local timber, coal and corn merchant, Wyckham Blackwell, who used it as a saw mill. This, together with Rollasons (Coal Merchants) at Coleshill, generated a reasonable amount of freight traffic, as did the two stately homes, which both had their own sidings, bringing in coal and Grimsby fish. The Packington siding is still commemorated by the nearby 'Siding Wood'. Blackwells bought the Hampton loco shed site from BR in 1971 but, sadly, the building burned down in 1977. They are, however, still on the site manufacturing 'timber engineered products', but, of course, their works is no longer served by rail.

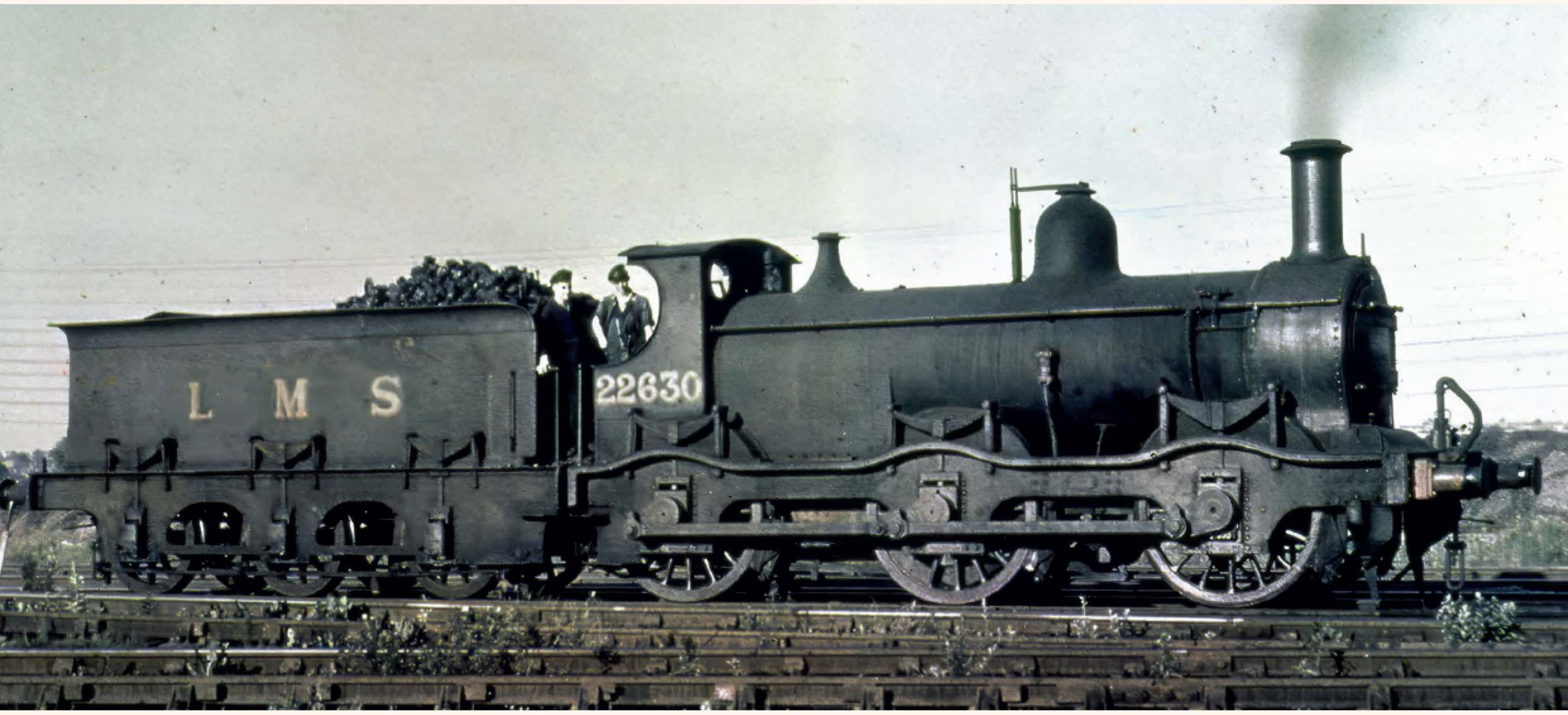
Despite this traffic, the line was woefully unremunerative and on St. George's Day 1930 the last official goods train ran. In 1935 Bridge 16 failed, effectively cutting the line into two long sidings. By then, the northern end was being used for storing crippled wagons. On one occasion a Beyer-Garratt locomotive is said to have lifted no fewer than 180 wagons from the branch, taking them to be scrapped. During the Second World War, the sheltered cuttings on the line were used for hiding ammunition trains and sand from pits near Packington was taken by train for use building airfield runways. A Fowler 4F 0-6-0 was the usual motive power as far as Coventry, but on at least one occasion a 'Black Five' was noted.

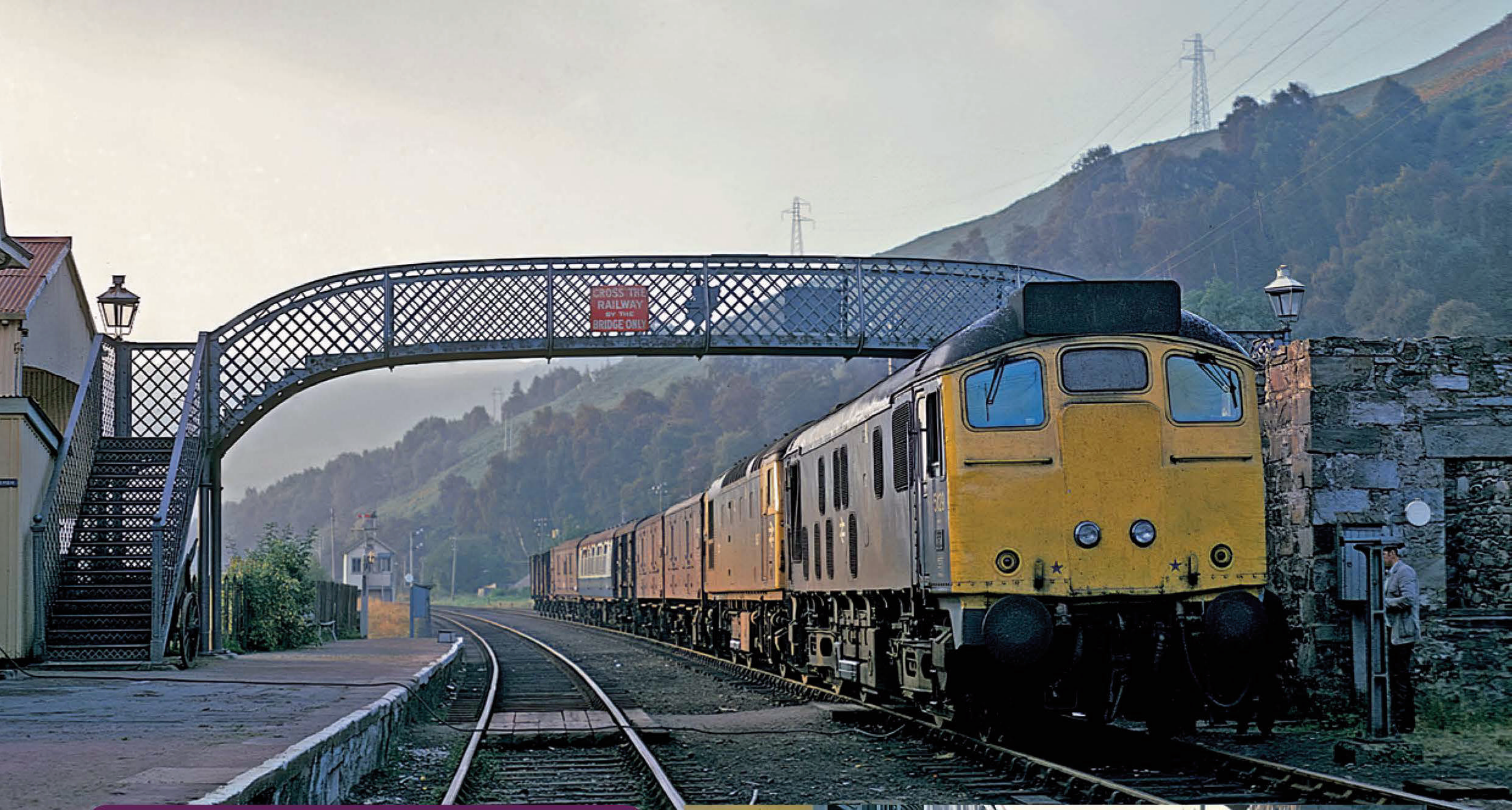
Before the outbreak of the Second World War, the line had one brief moment of glory. In March 1938, when war with Germany seemed highly likely, King George VI made a tour of armament manufacturing facilities, all of them car factories, in the West Midlands. The original plan had been to stable the Royal Train overnight on the Hampton branch but, as this was leaked to the public, Barnt Green sidings on the B&GR were used instead. But on the following day, while the King was visiting the Austin and Rover factories, the train was worked to Hampton by Compound No.1014. Eventually the King arrived by road and boarded the train, which was hauled off the branch by gleaming ex-works red 'Patriot' No.5526 *Morecambe and Heysham*. That would have been a sight to behold!

The Stonebridge Railway was finally put out of its misery when track lifting began at the north end in November 1951, continuing southwards into 1952. The very last track-lifting train was hauled by Ivatt Mogul No.46446 of Coventry shed.

Today the Birmingham & Derby Junction main line is still thriving as part of an important cross-country route, while its former rival, the Midland Counties line from Rugby to Leicester, closed in January 1962. Both Whitacre and Coleshill (formerly Forge Mills) stations closed in 1968, but on the site of the latter a new station called Coleshill Parkway opened in 2007, served by two trains an hour to and from Leicester, about half of which operate between Birmingham and East Anglia. The original station at Hampton survives as a Grade II Listed Building used as offices and in 2014 a local man excavated the platform fascia and brickwork of the original Coleshill (later Maxstoke) station. There are two locations where the OS map shows footpaths following the course of the railway but, other than that, the 'Stonebridge Railway' is no more.

Some of Matthew Kirtley's engines had very long lives. The last 0-6-0 to survive was LMS No.22630, seen here at Bournville shed, Birmingham, in 1946. As MR No.778 of Class 700 it had been built by Dűbs & Co. in 1870 and it was allocated the number No.58110 by BR. It is doubtful whether it ever carried it, being withdrawn in November 1951. (J. M. Jarvis/Colour-Rail.com LM29)





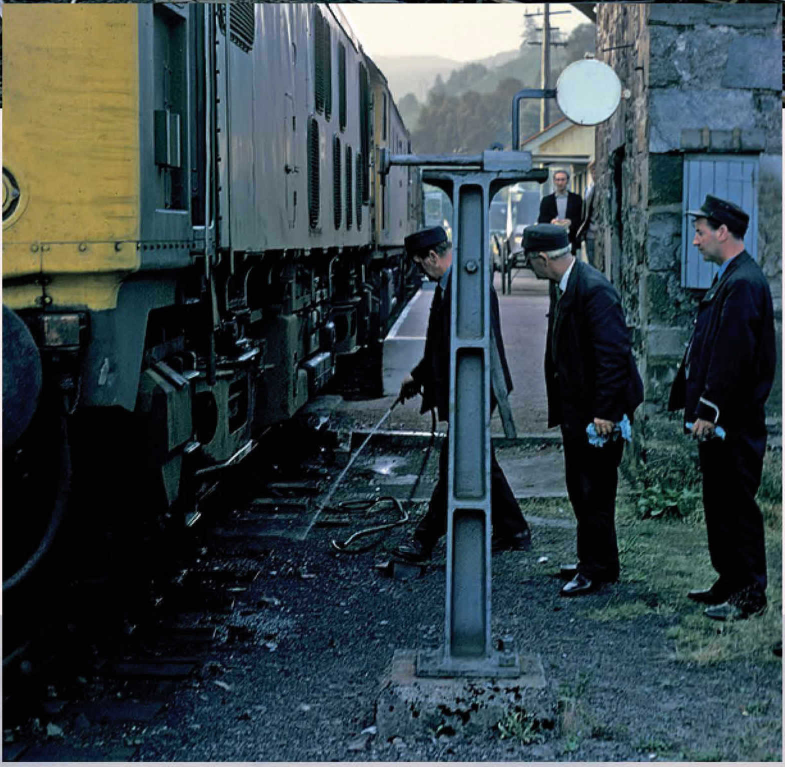
HIGHLAND MIXTURE

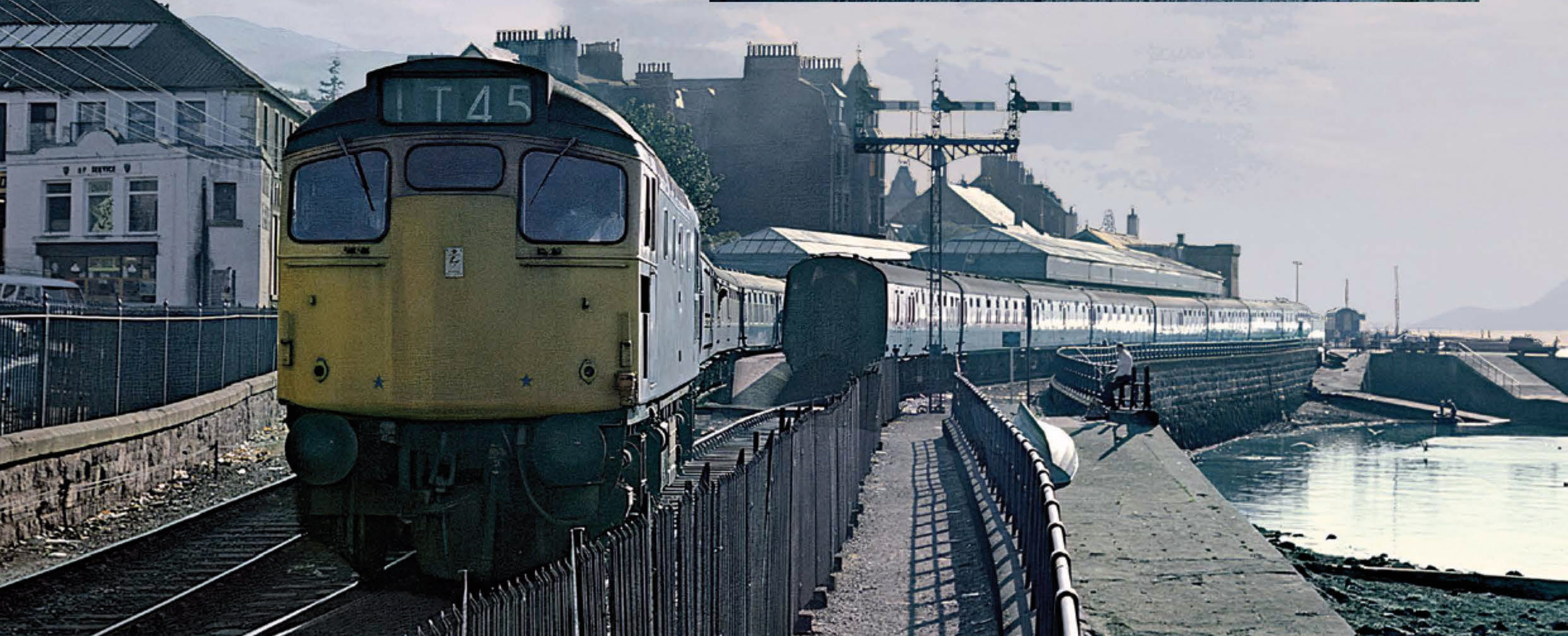
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **DAVID RODGERS**

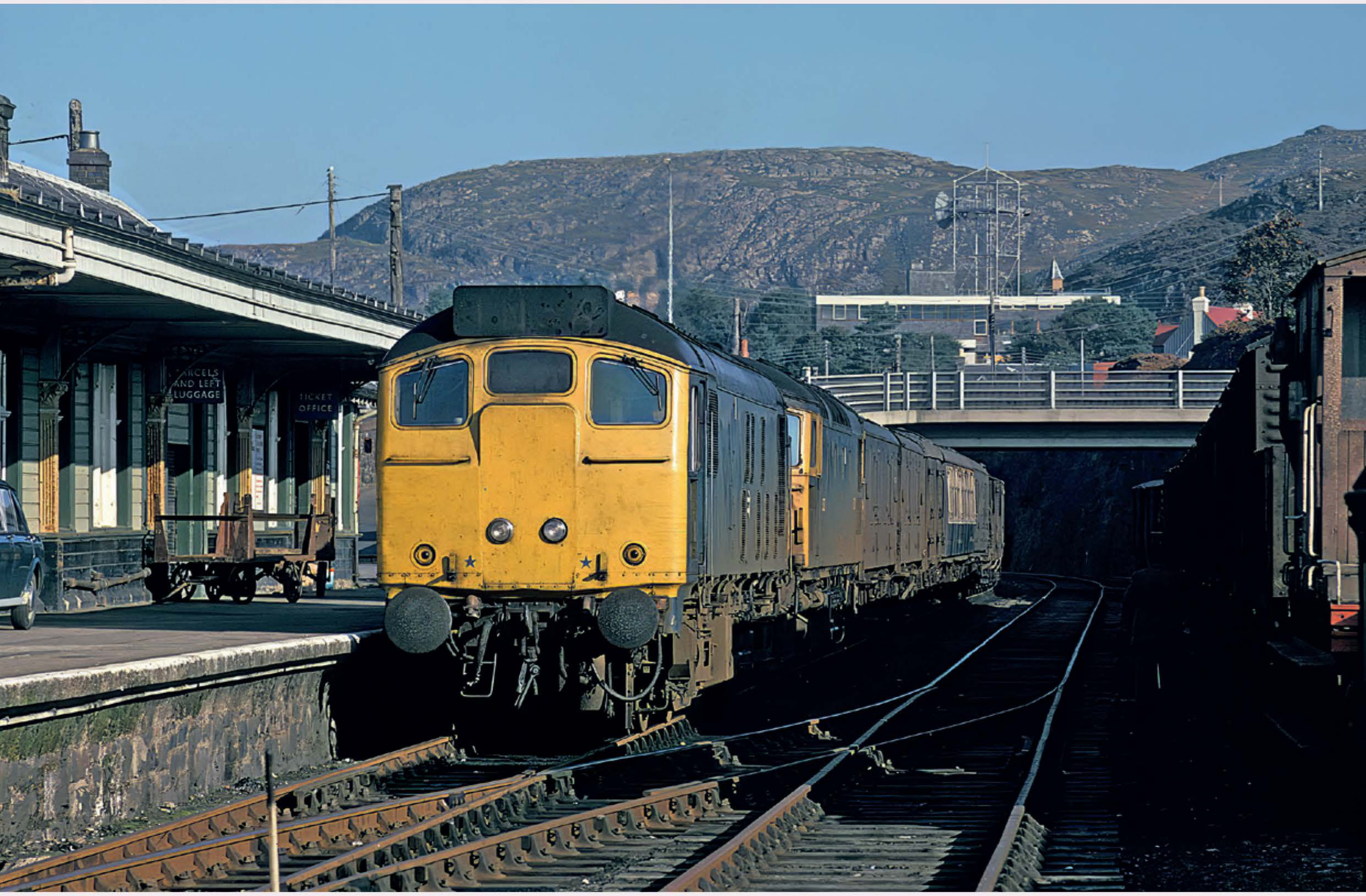
ABOVE: **Class 25 No. 5129 pilots an unidentified Class 26 at Garve on the 07.05 Dingwall–Kyle of Lochalsh consisting of bogie parcels vans, three-wheel vans and a passenger BG on 15th September 1973.**

RIGHT: **Minor attention with a hosepipe from the traincrew to Class 25 No.5129 at Garve. Of interest is the tablet catcher although presumably as the locomotive is no longer fitted with similar equipment this is not now operational. The recessed cabside of the Class 25 accommodating that equipment can be seen.**

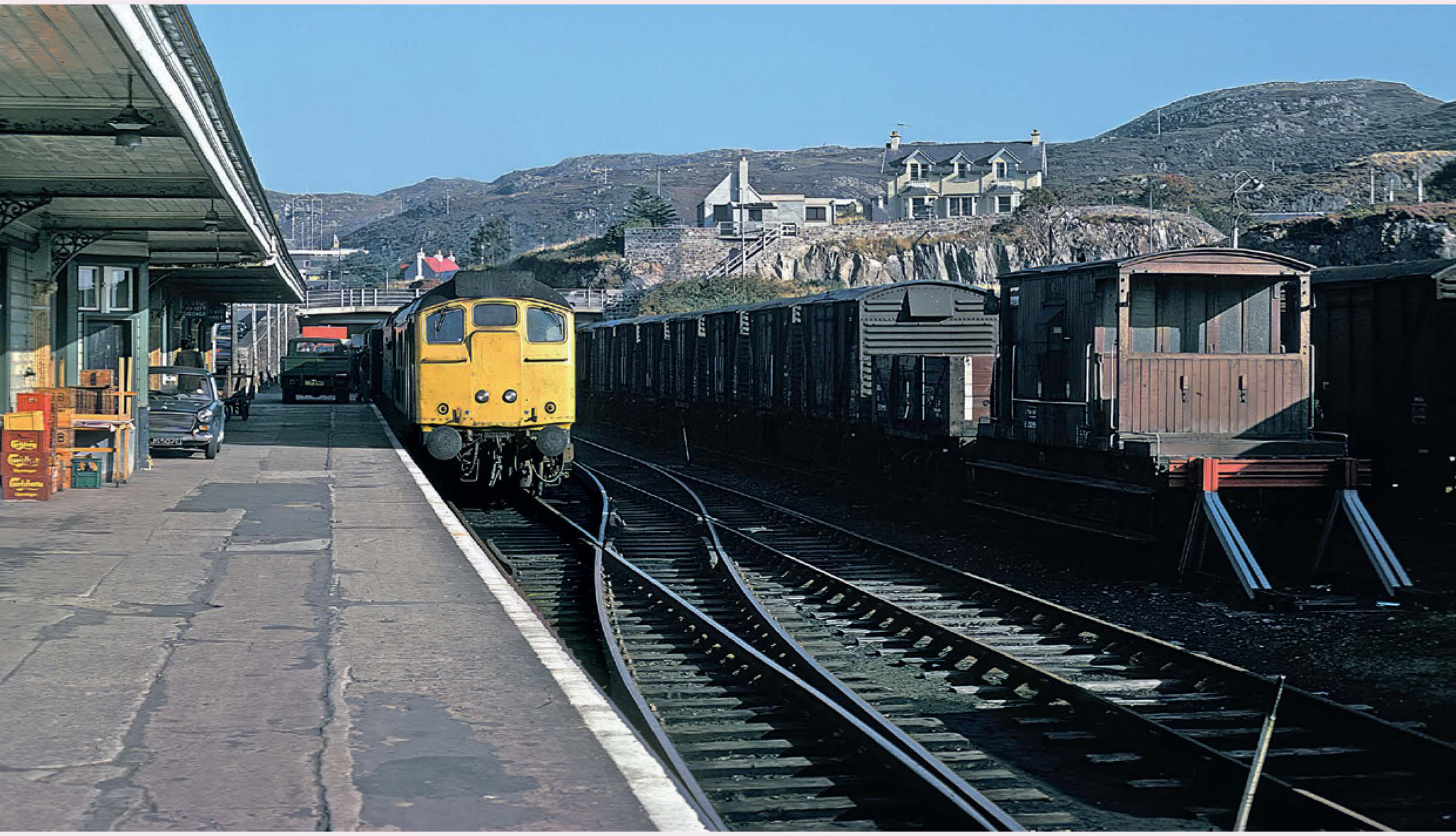
BELOW: **Hemmed in between housing/hotels and Loch Linnhie, the cramped layout of the old Fort William station is apparent as the 08.54 Fort William–Glasgow prepares to depart behind an unidentified Class 26 on 17th September 1973.**







Class 25 No. 5129 plus an unidentified Class 26 are seen on arrival at Kyle of Lochalsh with the 07.05 mixed train from Dingwall on 15th September 1973. Against a busy background of freight wagons road vehicles line up to begin unloading following the arrival of the Dingwall train, including a pick-up truck and a Royal Mail van. Note the Carlsberg crates stacked against the wall...



For the first meeting of the Motive Power Officers a visit was organised to view the modernisation work that was under way at Pomadie depot in Glasgow. At the time of the visit work on the ash plant had been completed but the new coaling tower, seen here, was delayed. In this undated view 'Duchess' Pacific No.46230 *Duchess of Buccleugh* is having its tender topped up. (Colour-Rail.com. 315801)

THE CONFERENCE OF MO

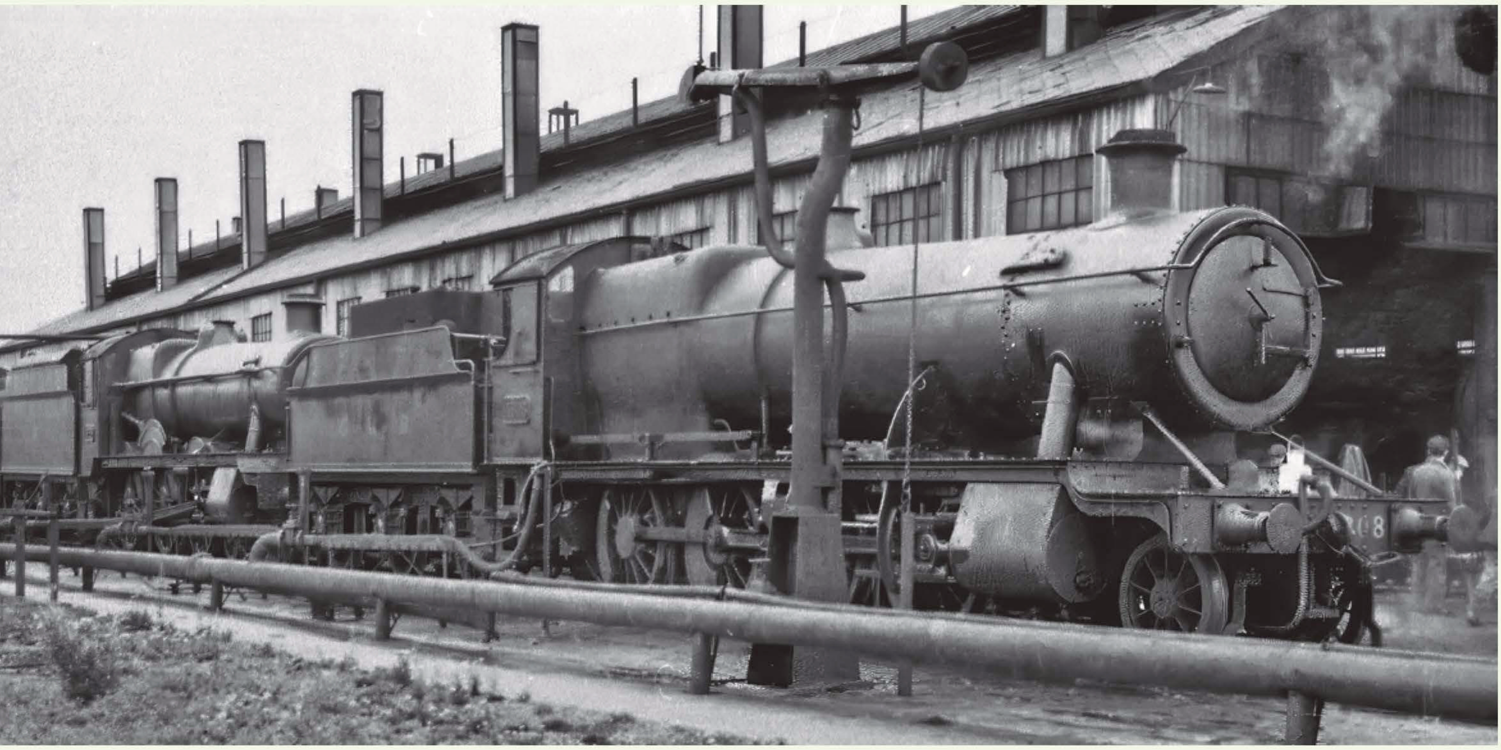
BY J. CROSSE

This dry-sounding name was employed for what today might be called a Meeting of Motive Power Chiefs, this event taking place at regular intervals from 1948 onwards following the formation of British Railways, where it was soon recognised that the Regions needed to talk to each other for two primary reasons, those being to introduce standardisation across motive power issues and operation and secondly to share problems and solutions to those problems. In a series of articles we will find out just what these champions of the motive power department had to deal with from the initial procedural and standardisation issues through to the turmoil of the steam to diesel transition of the late fifties and early sixties. The records are contained in a series of casebound books, generally being one for each year. It is unknown at this time if each attendee had a set of these books or if the surviving books are unique, being the only bound copies produced.

The first meeting took place in Glasgow on Tuesday 2nd March 1948 with the venue moving around the headquarters cities thereafter. The initial attendance comprised nine individuals with Harold Rudgard from the Railway Executive being in the chair. The individual railway representatives were listed in alphabetical order, a good way of avoiding any issues as to which was the superior Region, these being F. W. Abraham from the Midland, T. E. Chrimes (Southern), R. F. Harvey (Scottish), G. A. Musgrave (Eastern - Western Section), L. P. Parker (Eastern - Eastern Section), W. N. Pellow (Western) and S. M. Stedman (North Eastern), each being the respective Regional Motive Power Officer, on this occasion along with the Secretary, H. W. F. Rudkin. Possibly the attendance of two representatives from the Eastern illustrates that the London & North Eastern Railway never managed to integrate the Great Eastern ways of working with those out of King's Cross as presumably the term Eastern Section refers essentially to operations in East Anglia. Given some of the subjects that did come up for discussion the Scottish representative would also have a challenging time as no doubt daily ways of working north of the border were still very much split between London Midland & Scottish and LNER practices.

Eighteen subjects were listed for discussion on day one, the key one being the purpose of such meetings which the Chairman advised was "to discuss matters of common interest, consider exiting practices with the object of furthering development on standard and co-ordinated lines and securing maximum efficiency". He went on to say that in this connection the opportunity will be taken to visit motive power sites to enable the layout

Crewe North was a shed that had a considerable sum spent on it to upgrade its facilities including ash disposal. Part of that system is evident in this view where a narrow gauge ash wagon is alongside rebuilt 'Patriot' 4-6-0 No.45523 *Bangor* in 1960. (D. Forsyth/Colour-Rail.com g7108)



TIVE POWER OFFICERS

PART ONE

and facilities to be examined. Quite where that first conversation took place is open to speculation as the second agenda item was a visit to the recently updated shed at Polmadie, so perhaps they had all squeezed into the shed foreman's office to start the day. A brochure about all the changes had been prepared for the occasion but it was noted that the full workings could not be viewed as work on the coaling tower was not happening as planned which was preventing the saving of £1,500 per month – a not inconsiderable sum in those days. However, the new wet belt fitted ash plant was operational and was worthy of seven lines in the minutes.

A major agenda item was headed 'Accommodation at Motive Power Depots and Amenities' which started off by stating that "the men who have served in H M Forces have a background of good discipline which can be encouraged and fostered if the interior economy of the sheds, cleanliness and amenities are of sound lines". It was then noted that Psychology played an important part in securing efficiency and thus depots must be kept clean, tidy and free from scrap – perhaps a message lost in the mists of time as far as the state of some parts of the current rail system are concerned. The minutes went on to note that shed sweeping, whitewashing of lavatories and preservation of amenities must form part of the regular shed routine. Morale of the men was then linked to improved motive power availability and holes in shed roofs were cited as requiring urgent attention to improve working conditions. The first task the attendees were asked to undertake was to obtain figures on the number of sheds where roofs, if indeed there was one at all in some places, needed attention.

Some matters seemed mundane for people in high office but it was noted that blue brick was best to be laid under areas where ash was shovelled but old boiler plates were a good substitute whilst rammed chalk was the best substrate under coal stacks.

Pre-steaming of boilers was suggested as a way to get engines ready for service quicker, that requiring an on-site boiler. These had apparently been installed at sheds where oil firing of locomotives had been introduced, and as that was about to be terminated it was suggested that trials should take place with coal-fired engines at Whitemoor (actually presumably March shed), Annesley, Wellingborough, Fratton and Severn Tunnel Junction. One advantage of such a system was smoke reduction and even as early as 1948 it was noted that there had been complaints of excessive smoke from the medical officer for the Borough of St. Pancras concerning Camden shed.

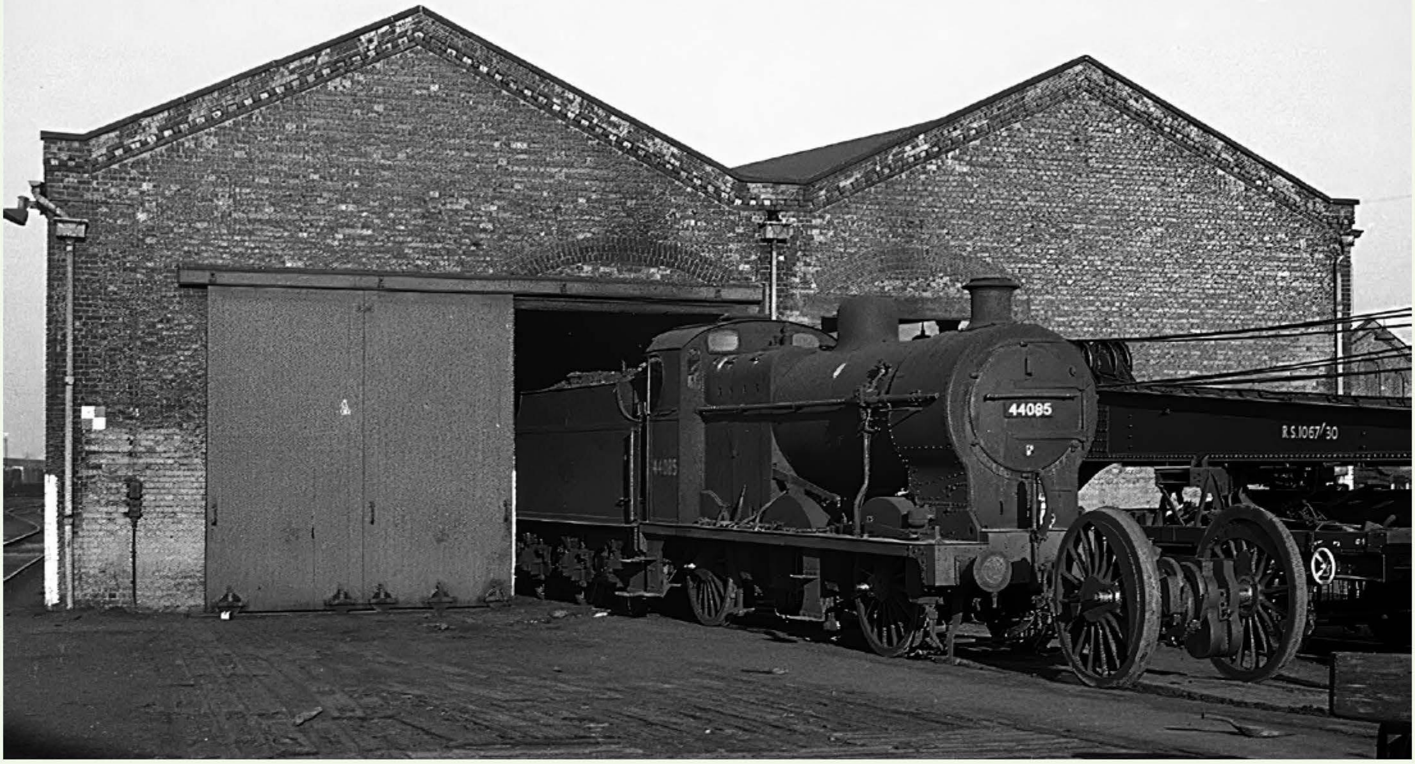
What became a constant theme at meetings was motive power availability. At this stage in the life of BR it was recognised that each Region both reported and actually performed differently, particularly around the availability of spare parts, and various tasks were handed out to make a start on ways to standardise the processes. It was noted that an improvement of 1% in locomotive availability would provide 204 engines for traffic and this would affect the locomotive building programme. Industrial relations soon reared their head with mention of a 'go slow' at Stratford Works and a refusal to carry out repairs on a shift basis at some sheds. Also listed was 'repairs to Austerity locomotives', that possibly referring to the one-off need to prepare such engines for traffic following war service. Proposals were made for an apprentice training scheme for artisans based at sheds as opposed to at the works and details were to be circulated.

One item close to the hearts of enthusiast was point 17: 'Visits by Members of the Public to Motive Power Depots' which was seen as a desired item of publicity and should be extended and it was proposed that District Commercial Officers should issue permits after consultation with the District Motive Power Officer. The next meeting was scheduled for just two weeks later at the Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool Street, and this subject was revisited as there were concerns over the need for the signing of indemnity forms.

After World War II a small number of engines was converted to oil burning to assess the suitability of the system for future use. Although not a decision taken by the Conference, its abandonment was minuted, this primarily being due to the lack of foreign exchange to purchase the oil. The Conference had been discussing the use of the live steam boilers used in conjunction with oil firing to provide a similar system for coal burning locomotives but that idea died with the abandonment of the oil scheme. The Western renumbered its-oil burning fleet and here we see '28XX' No.4807 and 'Hall' No.3904 *Saint Brides Hall* in 1947. (Colour-Rail.com 15892b)

At the meeting on 18th March there was an extensive discussion about East Coast Main Line speed restrictions which one might have thought was a Regional matter but it recorded that between King's Cross and Edinburgh there were currently five 20mph and two 40mph temporary restrictions and each 20mph one was said to cause four minutes of lost time. Attention then moved to lodging turns and through working by crews, but it was noted that this would have to be dealt with after consultations with the unions. However, there was a desire to re-instate the non-stop 'Flying Scotsman' on 31st May but a final decision had not been reached. An appendix showed some of the detail being considered including availability of lodgings. Interestingly it was suggested that Edinburgh men lodge at the Midland hostel in Kentish Town whilst King's Cross men would use 'staff rooms' at the North British Hotel in Edinburgh.

The labour required to produce some of

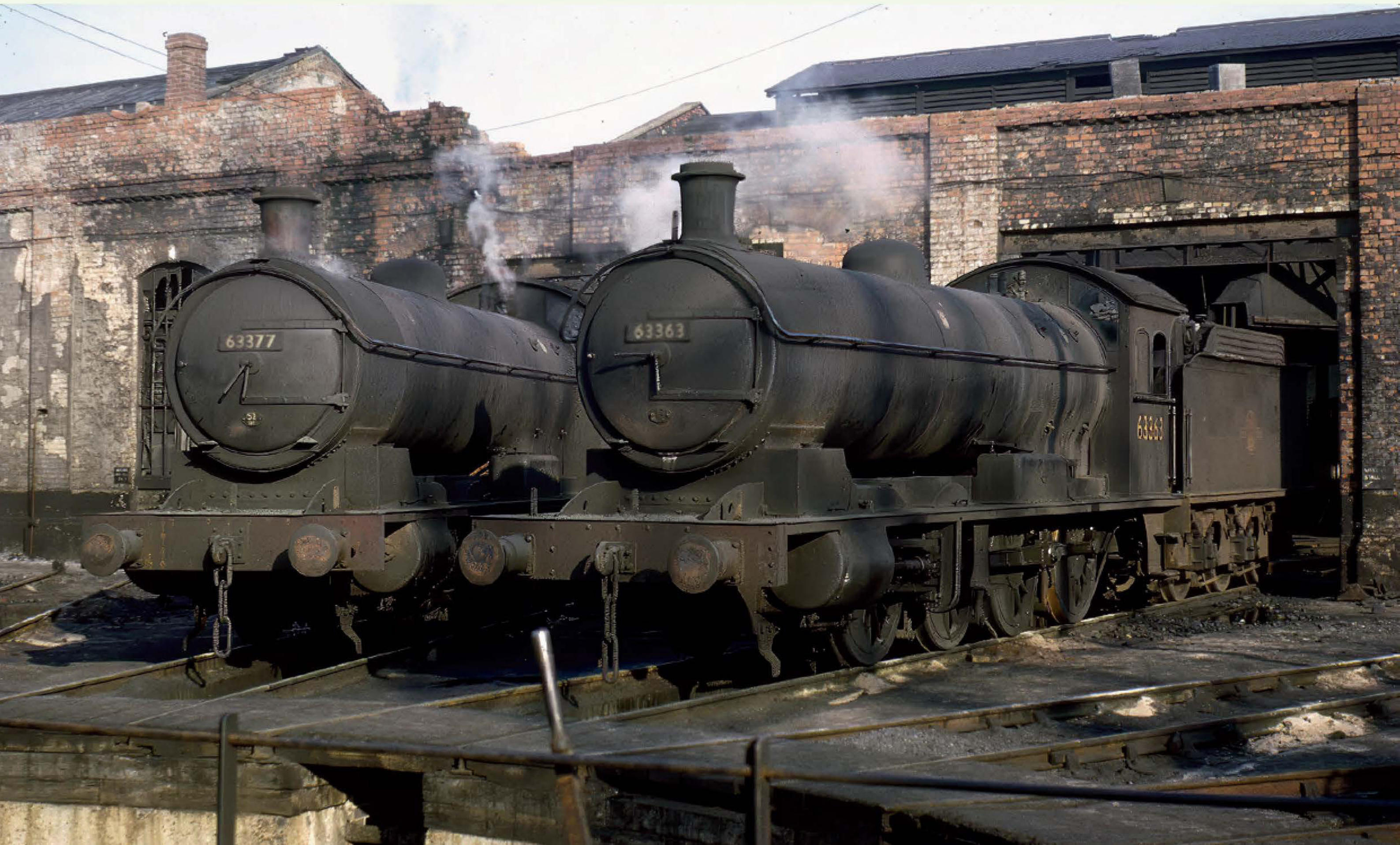


An early subject for attention and discussion was that of axlebox and motion bearing failures. Given the past reputation of Midland Railway axleboxes it might have been expected that the London Midland Region would be near the top of the table for such failures but in fact it fought over the best performance slot with the Western. However 4F No.44085 seems to have suffered such a failure with the driving axle having been extracted for attention at Wellingborough in 1961.
(K. Fairey/Colour-Rail.com 8773)

the operating data contained in the minutes must have been staggering, one such being an analysis of hot boxes over a two-week period, with failures being listed down to the individual axlebox. The total locomotive stock at 7th February was quoted as 20,410 and 472 hot boxes were noted split by Region. Best performance numbers were held jointly by the Midland and Western with 1.1% of locomotives having a failure. Collectively the Eastern was by far the worst with 3.9% in its Eastern Section and 4.2% in the Western Section, whilst the North Eastern was clearly bottom of the pack with 5.4%. The cost of each bearing failure was estimated at £60-£70 and this was followed by a detailed discussion on 'wick trimmings', including standardising the materials used. Proposals were made for inter-Regional learning with supervisors from works having organised visits to similar facilities on other Regions, whilst maintenance supervisors from sheds should also visit works facilities regularly.

Bearing in mind that we are here but ten weeks into the British Railways era, the subject of locomotive design has already arisen. It is stated that for 1948 and 1949 existing designs would continue to be built whilst in 1950 only selective duplication of

The provision of dry working conditions for locomotive maintenance was the subject of much discussion with facilities found to be at their worst in the North Eastern Region. Tyne Dock was a classic of 'open air' accommodation which would have been particularly unpleasant when the nagging and cold wind set in from the North Sea. NER Q6 0-8-0s Nos.63363/77 stand in the roofless roundhouse on a deceptively sunny day.
(Colour-Rail.com 364539)



Plans were advised concerning building works at Southall shed to provide amongst other things a diesel servicing shed. As this pre-dated by a number of years the arrival of the DMU fleet, this was being provided for the GWR railcars and also its small fleet of 350hp shunters. No.W34 stands alongside what looks like a very new tank, possibly for fuel oil in 1959. (K. Fairey/Colour-Rail.com 32595)

types would be allowed. New Standard types were scheduled for 1951 and the Executive Officer (Design) had requested detailed input from those present on their requirements alongside feedback on the good and bad points of the existing classes. Specific proposals were expected for the next meeting. Related to this it was apparent that details of the locomotive exchange trials had been discussed elsewhere as the committee discussion centred around, for example, restrictions on who was allowed in the dynamometer car but it was noted that a separate meeting was required to formalise all the requirements.

Just over a month later the group reconvened, this time at King's Cross where the requested figures on leaking shed roofs were reported. This showed that out of 560 sheds 42% were dry with another 10% rated at 90% or more. At 'less than 30% dry' there were 67 sheds. Whilst the Western had the highest total at sixteen, on a percentage basis the Eastern Region (Western Section) came out worst at 26% having less than 30% dry cover. A report was tabled on upgrade schemes which included a proposal for a new building at Langwith but in the interim £2,175 was to be spent to upgrade the ash plant. At Crewe North over £40,000 had been authorised for the first stage of a rebuild involving a new coaling plant, two ash plants and the installation of a 70ft turntable, whilst one of the latter had been brought into use at Crewe South on 11th April. A new shed was proposed for Newport (Teesside) whilst at Southall a new shed building along with a diesel car shed and repair shop, locomotive repair shop and staff amenities, this totalling £195,000, had been approved by the operating department but had not yet got financial approval.

Concern was expressed over a Government scheme to export 18 million tons of the best coal during in 1948 as this was bound to hit both the quality and quantity of coal available to the railways. Railway coal useage was approaching 300,000 tons per week and classified as grade 1, 2 or 3. The Regions were instructed to minimise the use of grade 1 coal, particularly hard for the Southern which was predicting a requirement of 71% whilst the Midland thought it could make do with just 19% of Grade 1 coal. Grade 3 coal included opencast and 'other house coals' plus briquettes. A maximum stock, dictated by the Government, was not to exceed two weeks' supply. Various ways for eking out supplies included supplying sheds with limestone or broken brick to spread on the fire to prevent the formation of clinker. Economical firing techniques were also to be the subject of Mutual Improvement Classes. Some poor clerk had been requested to work out the total amount of coal burnt by steam engines in 1946 and had come up with the precise figure of 14,342,307 tons. Self-weighing tenders as a means of monitoring coal use were also on the agenda. It was recorded that the LMS had two but there were now proposals to build a further eighteen for use everywhere except the Southern Region.

Mention of the new Standard designs of locomotive were brief but it was advised that a wooden mock-up of the proposed cab layout would be made for inspection by all relevant parties. Hot boxes were also back on the agenda with questions about the number of failures on non-driving axles and tenders but no answers were forthcoming. Another full report on such failures was submitted with on this occasion the Western beating the Midland to record the lowest percentage of failures. An item on the cleaning of engines referred to the use on the Eastern and Southern Regions of the Weaver Steam Jenny. A Davies & Metcalfe cleaning machine used on the Scottish Region was also discussed, these devices seeming to basically be like modern-day steam cleaners in their action. A lot more information was requested to be gathered on the machines and their usefulness. As mentioned at the outset, much time was spent in these initial meetings on standardisation across the Regions and this included training and experience needed to gain promotion for both maintenance

British Railways inherited just two self-weighing tenders from the LMS and proposed to build eighteen more for use on all of the Regions except the Southern. One of the original two is paired with Stanier 5MT 4-6-0 No.4986. Photographic evidence suggests that ultimately they were only ever widely used on the London Midland Region although examples were paired at least with a 'Castle' and B1.
(P. Hughes/Colour-Rail.com 95238)

4986
4986
L M S

staff and management roles. For reasons not explained item 62 on the agenda concerned the employment of Polish nationals. 315 were employed at the end of March 1948 with almost all on the East Coast Main Line and London Midland Regions. The Western had just one whilst none was employed in the North East or Scotland. Finally an appendix to the minutes set out in minute detail the cost of operating the Polmadie ash plant for the first three months of the year. Of course calculated to the nearest penny, it was £798 3s 9d.

It was the turn of the Southern to host the next meeting, that being at Charing Cross on 11th May where 'pressure from the top' in the shape of the Railway Executive was being applied to reduce the number of employees, this dictat ignoring the fact that there had been an agreement to increase staff holidays and reduce the working week to 44 hours. Work was under way to determine the authorised staff levels for all grades and locations. Frequent mention is made of artisan staff but few actual job titles appear to accurately establish which roles are covered but they included boilersmiths and coppersmiths. A comparison was made of artisans to locomotive numbers for each Region and the Western and Southern both had a ratio of 1.7 artisans per locomotive whereas the Eastern was at 1.1. A bonus system based on payment by results had been agreed. However, just how the results were to be measured had not been agreed. A trial scheme at Saltley shed was to be evaluated. Further mention was made of Mutual Improvement Classes which were said to be operating on all Regions whilst the former LMS and LNER sheds have visiting trains used specifically for artisan training.

The vexed question of coal supplies continued to be raised. A survey of coaling methods was under way but it was noted that the Western always favoured manual coaling due to the friable nature of Welsh coal. This problem had been encountered elsewhere and a new design of mechanical plant that might be used with softer coals had been installed at Darlington and it was requested that a representative from the Western go to Darlington to view the new plant. Smoke reduction reared its head once more with the trial of a device to reduce emissions, the 'Jay-Gee' smoke eliminator which was said to work by using a jet of atomised steam injected 'into the chamber of the locomotive' to vary the use of secondary air. This had been trialled on J50 and J72 tanks and it was agreed that J50 No.8950 would be loaned to the LMR for trials at Cricklewood.

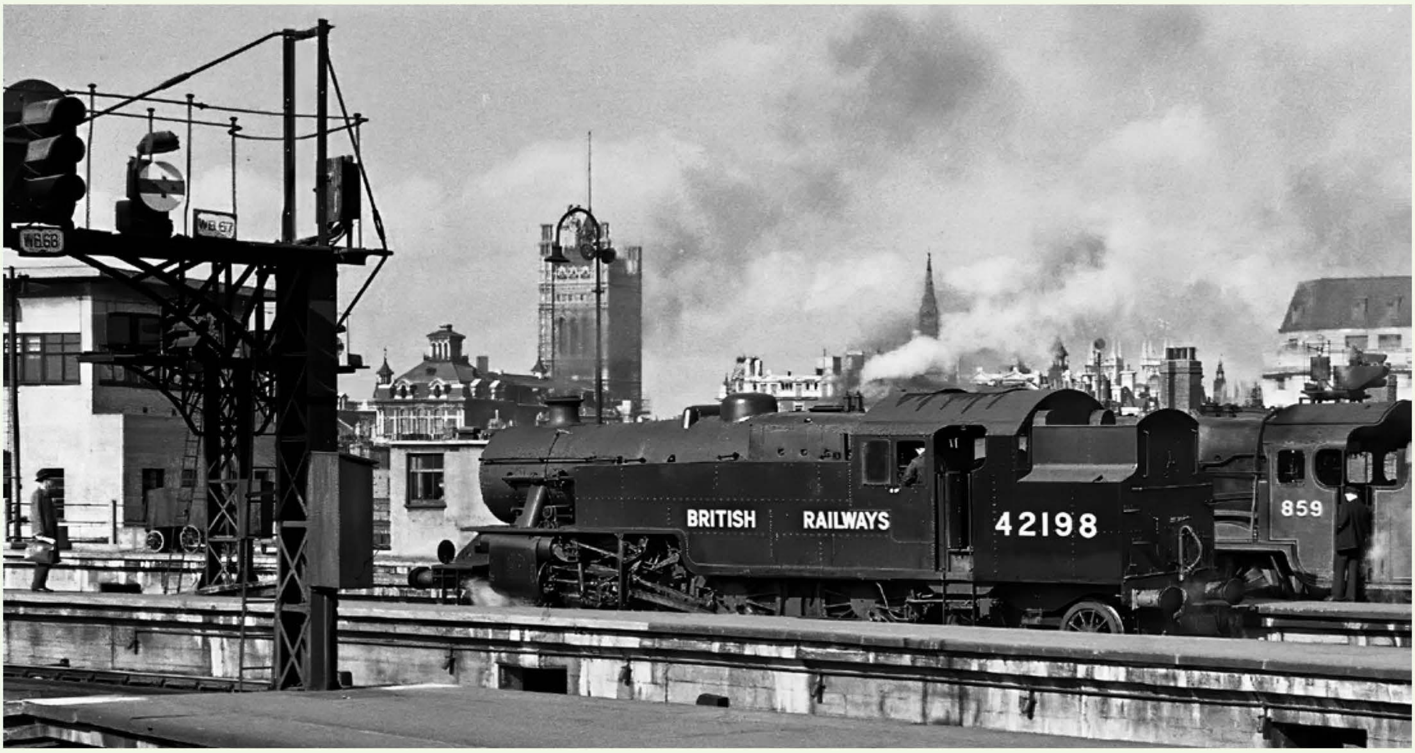
The committee turned its attention to stored locomotives and was very keen on ensuring that all surplus engines were stored with no class being off limits, but that high mileage locomotives and those in breaking-up programmes were left in traffic in order to ensure that they received the overhaul or impending condemnation. Further guidance appeared in an appendix to the effect that a locomotive may only be put to store in serviceable condition and should not remain out of traffic for more than three months. All coal was to be removed and the engine cleaned prior to storage. Cleaning of locomotives was again debated with the desire to present an appropriate standard of care to the public having to be balanced against the demands to reduce the labour force. Against all that cleaners were quite rapidly moving up the jobs ladder to cover vacancies in the higher grades. As an aid to shed staff, but also blackout requirements, 'light tunnels' had been provided during the war at Peterborough, Darnall, Doncaster and March. Whilst these had proved effective they were not to be proliferated, with an emphasis placed on mobile lighting and the fitting of fluorescent lighting in pits for the future. Lights were also the subject of debate with regard to water trough installations and it was agreed that the start of all troughs should be marked with a light but not the end of them.

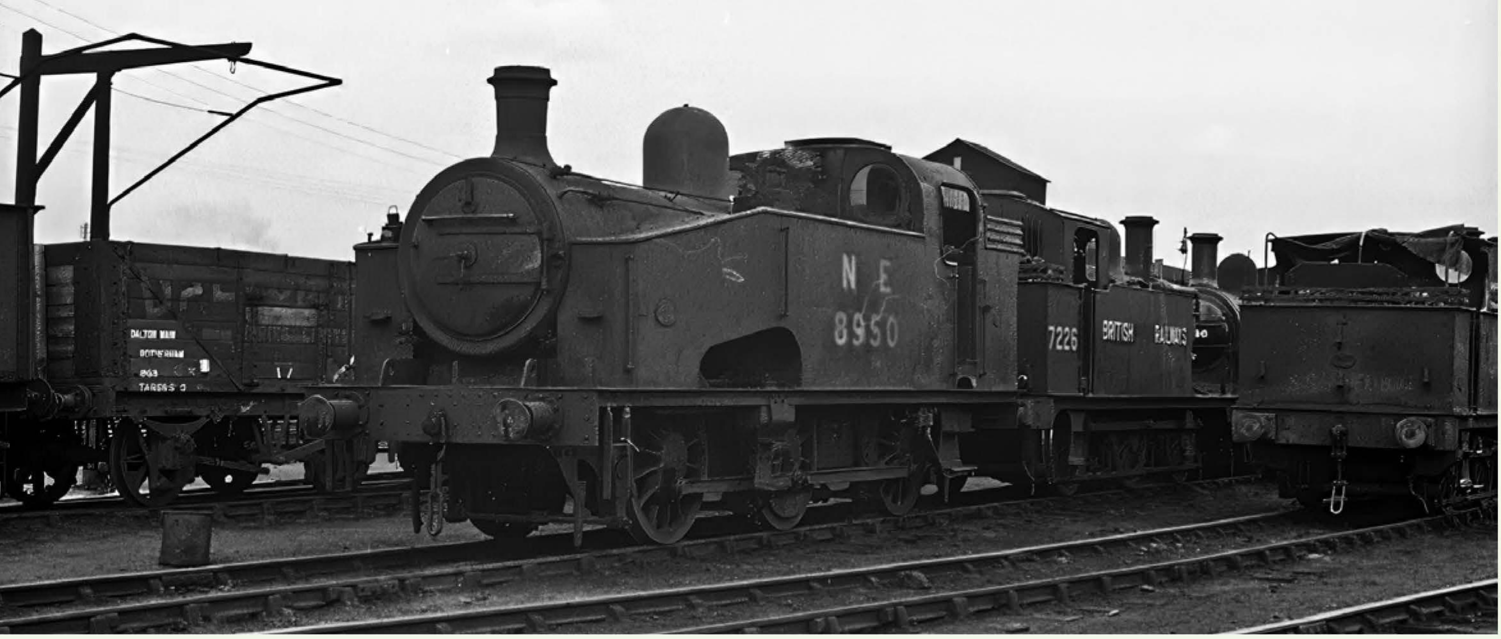
A stranger in the house. LMS-designed Class 4 2-6-4T No.42198 at Waterloo on 23rd April 1948. This and another had been loaned for evaluation on the Southern, a trial that proved successful. It was recorded that the pair was required urgently back in Scotland. (Colour-Rail.com 2159a)

Deliberations continued in June with two meetings scheduled at Euston and Paddington respectively. A detailed analysis of motive power staff split by month was presented which showed that despite the directive to reduce staff numbers increased going from 126,758 in January to 132,887 in mid-May with further increases predicted due to the new 44-hour week.

Despite the fact that the railways were extremely dependant on running to time, a request for the railway to pay for/provide watches for enginemen was completely rejected by the committee even though it was noted that some guards did receive company watches. Meanwhile the 'coal debate' continued with the recording of figures for failures since the start of the year due to inferior coal at 149, with delays totalling 36,921 minutes in total due to poor coal.

For the first time specific motive power requirements surfaced, these being around the 'very old' locomotives being used for certain shunting duties with Y7s on the North Sunderland Railway and Midland 1F tanks. It was suggested that a new design for light shunting locomotives was required which was to be further reviewed. An evaluation of the Fairburn design of 2-6-4 tank on the Southern had been entirely successful after step modifications needed for clearance in some places and the two engines concerned should be returned urgently to the Scottish Region whence they came. A 204hp diesel shunter loaned to the railway under an LNER agreement had been working in Manchester and had now moved to Ipswich Docks. This can be identified as what became No.DS1173 and later D2341 and actually worked at Gorton, Ipswich, Lowestoft, Cambridge and Stratford before moving to the Southern Region at that time, still being known by its works number 2217. It acquired its DS number





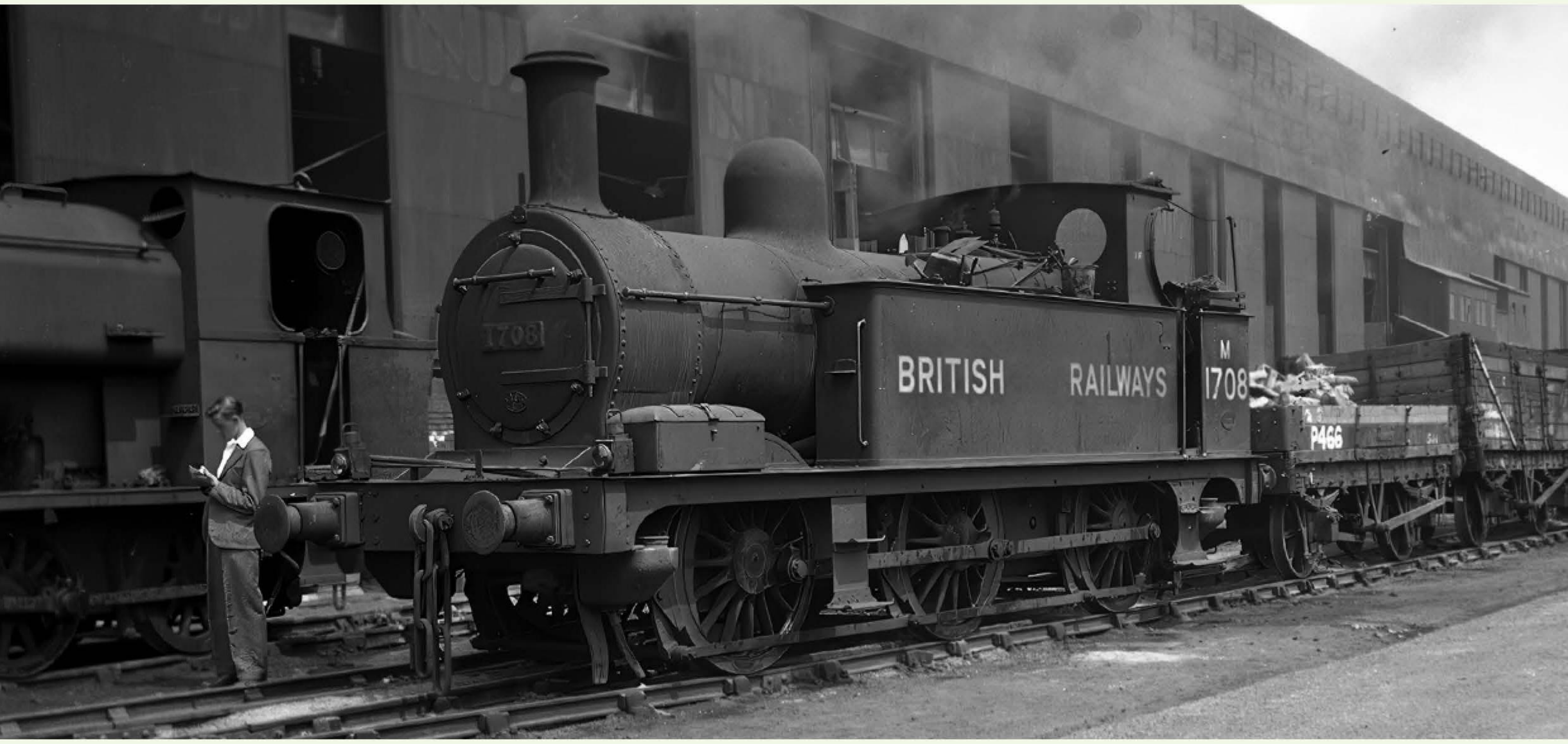
Amongst a number of items of equipment under test on locomotives was the Jay-Gee Smoke Eliminator intended to do what it said on the tin. One engine fitted was J50/3 No.8950 which was loaned to Cricklewood shed for trials and is seen there on 5th June 1948. (T. B. Owen/Colour-Rail 1650)

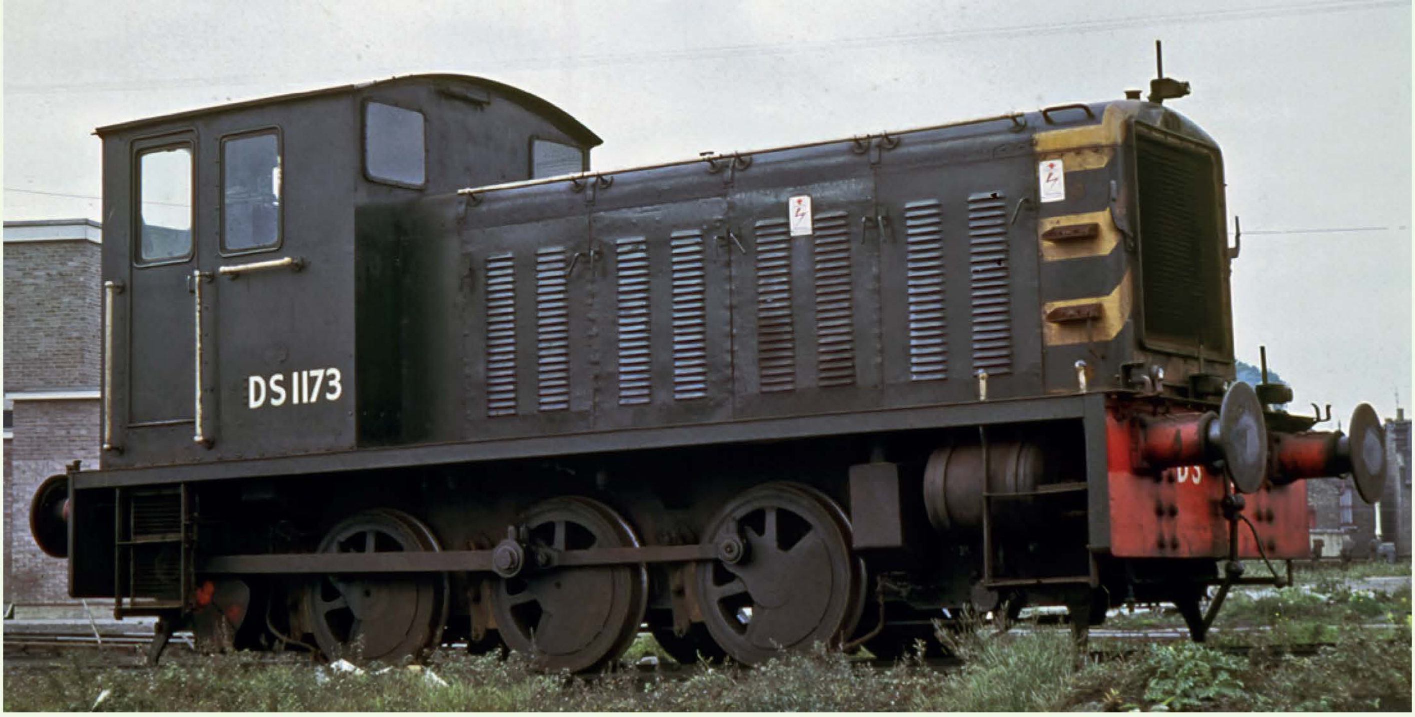
on arrival on the Southern where it spent much of its life based at Hither Green.

An analysis of stored locomotives was made available, these totalling 203 on 29th May 1948. The significant totals were LMR 71, SR 74 and WR Nil. Two months later, despite it being the height of the summer traffic, that number had risen to 269. Another change subsequently was that engines could be stored for up to six months rather than the previous three. Moving on to locomotive overhauls, it was agreed that each Region should set up a Central Shopping Bureau if one was not already operating. The bureau would control the acceptance of engines for overhaul and decide in which works that would take place. The proposal was to use the LMR system and that all Regions use the same forms as part of the process. Also under study was a common system for in-service locomotive examinations again aimed at having a common one across all Regions.

Thinking ahead, the committee agreed to carry out a survey of snowplough availability as at 1st July which should include the type of plough and its capabilities, whilst another task was, following the interest in hot boxes, to compile data on big and little end failures. Clearly an area of dispute was that of cross-Regional boundaries support, for example helping recovery of broken-down or derailed trains. Whilst it was noted that there should also be co-operation where there were 'penetrating line' sheds it was stated that Edge Hill depot was already doing some machine shop work for Brunswick as were Chester for Bidston, Bank Hall for Walton and Leeds (presumably Holbeck) for Copley Hill. The ever evolving coal situation had worsened with the Government refusing to grant the railways preferential status in the supply of coal. Train failures due to poor coal were now being monitored weekly. Further to the evaluation of the Darlington coaling plant it was decided to supply it with Welsh coal. In order for that to be used efficiently an Inspector was to be sent there from the Western Region to advise the firemen on appropriate firing methods. The scheme to convert many engines to oil firing was to be abandoned with locomotives to be converted back to coal at their next overhaul except that two 'Castles' and some LMR 'Black 5s' should be dealt with as a matter of urgency. There had been much discussion about the training of firemen and figures were supplied showing the number of firemen and passed cleaners. It was the ratio between the two which was a cause for debate. Whilst the Scottish Region had 2,595 drivers it had 2,180 passed cleaners so in round terms there were 85 passed cleaners for every 100 drivers. whilst on the Western and Southern

Concern was expressed about the retention of some 'very old' shunting engines which was necessary due to the need for light, short wheel-based types. Cited as examples were the LNER Y9 and LMS 1F and the need to design and build a replacement type was suggested. Here we see Midland 1F No.41708 at one such location, Staveley, in July 1949. The proposal fell on deaf ears as No.41708 was still gainfully employed there into the 1960s. (K. Fairey/Colour-Rail.com 8209)





On loan shunter Works Number 2217 was purchased by British Railways and put into departmental use as No.DS1173 by the Southern Region and was based at Hither Green where this picture was taken. (Colour-Rail.com DE2333)

the ratio was around seventeen cleaners per 100 drivers.

The fitting of speed recorders to locomotives was not considered necessary although where engines had previously been fitted the recorders would be re-instated. However, a limited fitting programme would be investigated. Having decided to fit a lamp at the start of all water troughs, cost now became an issue and further investigations were to be undertaken. Engine damage due to poor track condition at sheds had been mentioned on several occasions. At Stratford shed (allocation 309 locomotives) thirteen men were continuously employed on shed track maintenance whilst at Old Oak Common (224 locomotives) five men were on permanent duty. With a trend to larger locomotives it was agreed that new or upgraded turntables should always be of 70ft length.

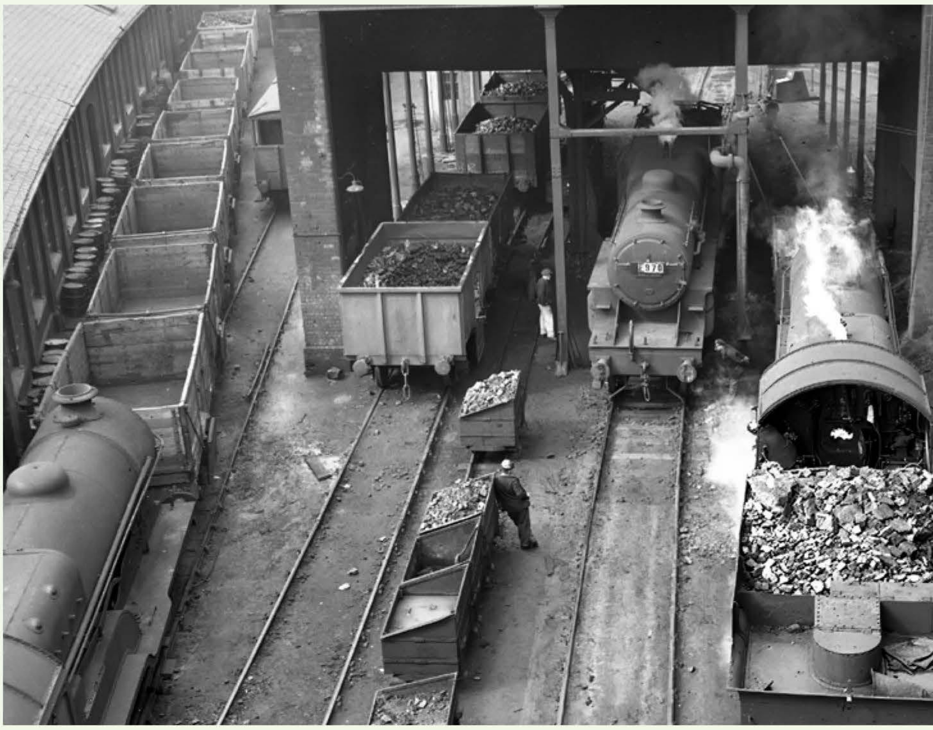
A full month elapsed before the next meeting on 28th July. Employee numbers were discussed once more. To achieve a 44-hour week shed staff were working eleven days per fortnight, but such was the staffing situation that 25,000 footplate staff were still stuck on twelve days per fortnight. To help improve the situation the Ministry of Labour had temporarily ceased calling up railway staff for National Service. However, traffic projections for 1950 service levels indicated an ongoing problem both for staff and locomotive availability. A standard classification system for locomotive repairs was agreed upon. The slightly odd situation that a seriously damaged locomotive could be deemed to have had a light casual repair was born here under the definition 'Repair or replace those parts that have become defective due to failure or mishap, making the engine unserviceable'.

Mention had previously been made about water treatment on the Southern Region. They were evaluating the French TIA system of additives on ten engines (eight at Ramsgate and two at Dover). If water needed treating when those locomotives were away from the shed, Afloc B Briqettes were substituted. It was suggested that the system be tried on the Tilbury section. A first reference to Rugby Testing Station was made to the effect that it would not be ready for a further two months and planned tests on an 'Austerity' 2-10-0 were to be deferred and the engine concerned could be returned to traffic. Also receiving a first mention was a proposal to design a standard diesel shunter type. All agreed that one based on the already existing 350hp type would be suitable. The trial of the 204hp shunter had found that its 9ft wheelbase was restrictive with a suggestion that the centre driving wheels should be flangeless. The report on big and little end failures was appended. This reflected a similar situation to that appertaining to axlebox failures with the various Eastern sections including the North Eastern Region being by far the worst. The Midland was the best, recording just twelve bearing failures from a total of 6,329 locomotives for the four weeks ending 12th June 1948.

Just seven months had elapsed since the first meeting of the group and it had covered a multitude of different subjects and as such each unique subject was given a separate reference number with the total reaching 180.

(to be continued)

The Cheshire Lines Committee's Brunswick shed in Liverpool was an LNER outpost at nationalisation and Regional boundaries were not modified to address the issue of 'penetrating lines' for several years in some cases. However, the Conference discussed 'mutual help' between sheds in different Regions which were physically close to each other. One case that was already active was Edge hill providing some machine shop facilities for locomotives based at Brunswick shed. This view at Brunswick taken in 1953 shows that LNER influence was still strong with D11/1 4-4-0 No.62663 *Prince Albert* present but the LMR presence had arrived in the shape of 'Crab' 2-6-0 No.42788. (Colour-Rail.com 77155)



Readers' Forum

Letters intended for publication should ideally add extra detail to our articles (or offer corrections of course!) and not be too long, consistent with the detail they offer. As always, we are sorry that space and time prevent us from printing them all or sending personal replies. ED.

Gremlin attack (in reverse)

Apologies to the shades of Alan Tyson – on p693 of the October issue his photograph of the Barclay 0-6-0ST at Shotton Colliery was regrettably printed back to front. **Ed.**

The Midland Railway in Northampton

I would like to congratulate Barry Taylor on his excellent article regarding Northampton's railways (October) and if I may, add the following information with reference to the power station at Northampton which stood just to the north of Hardingstone Junction, and was rail connected to it. I worked there in the late 1960s. The power station was in operation from 1919 to 1976 and following closure the building remained in use as a grain store still rail connected for some years. The power station had its own locomotives. One, an Andrew Barclay 0-4-0, I believe has been preserved, and another was a fireless locomotive which was conveniently recharged with steam when required from the power station boilers. I have a vivid personal memory of the very curved power station sidings which I believe are just visible to the left in one of the article photographs. One day whilst walking across them, I was tempted to take a short cut through a long rake of empties blocking my way, but I was immediately glad that I had not when a locomotive coupled to the front, and out of sight due to the curvature, suddenly moved the rake off with much crashing and bumping from the loose couplings.

Thanks as always for an excellent magazine.

John Wynn, by email

Book Reviews

|★★★★★ Excellent|★★★★ Very Good|★★★ Good|★★ Fair|★ Poor|

The Great Western Railway in the Stroud Valley

By Mike Fenton. Published by Lightmoor Press. 312pp hardback. 280mm x 280mm x 12mm. ISBN 978 1 91506 37 5. £60.00

This is a beautiful *magnum opus*, literally, and really it's difficult to set about offering a review of it at all. What can I know that could be put towards a critical opinion?! However...

The scene is set by some historical background. As far as railways are concerned, the GWR Swindon–Gloucester main line passes through the Stroud Valley between Kemble and Stonehouse. The valley, in the Cotswolds, became notable for its industries, especially textiles, and the GWR main line was opened in 1845.

The book is divided into eleven chapters and it might help to give an idea of the extent of the coverage: Historical Background, the Cheltenham & Great Western Union Railway, Charles Richardson and Jackdaw Bridge, Brunel - Poetry in Timber, Piercing the Cotswold Escarpment, A Broad Gauge Main Line, Gauge Conversion, Stroud Station, Brimscomb and the Bankers, Stonehouse Station and Tetbury Road Station.

Over 312 pages the history of everything railway-wise directly or indirectly relating to the history of the area is set out before us in detail, with authority and patently with enthusiastic affection.

The entire work is lavishly illustrated – and not just with 'railway photographs'. There are documents, letters, posters, timetables, civil engineers' drawings, prints (many in colour) of the locality, personalities... There cannot be any aspect of the history, geography and sociology of the Stroud Valley line which has not been studied in depth and consequently enlarged upon.

There seems little more an outside reviewer can offer. At £60 it is likely to be aimed towards those with a specific interest in the railway and this part of the country. Whilst the page count is in effect barely five *Backtracks,* when bound together in this page size it presents a sizeable and weighty tome for which you'll need a good book shelf. However, for the scholarship, research, time and care expended on it I can do no other than award it five stars.

★★★★★ **MB**

On the tracks of The Flying Scotsman

By David Pendleton (text) and Gavin Morrison (photographs). Published by Great Northern Books. ISBN 978-1-914227-80-6. 144pp hardback. £22.50.

This book has been trailed to some extent by two photo features in this magazine in Vol.39 Nos. 6 and 8. The 'Flying Scotsman' train service (not the locomotive!) has a long and distinguished existence as the 10.00am from London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley. This book is a pictorial journey along the entire route, from south to north, accompanied by a readable narrative and a comprehensive collection of Gavin Morrison's photographs covering the steam, diesel and electric years. All the classic locations are covered from King's Cross to the great station at York, the viaduct and cathedral at Durham, the amazing crossover junctions at Newcastle, the wonderful Royal Border Bridge at Berwick, the exciting coastal views on the North Sea section, the well-set Waverley station in the Scottish capital. A few of the photographs also appeared in Gavin's pictorial sets in *BT* (where I have to say their reproduction was better), but that nothwithstanding, this is an enjoyable wander over the years, divided up by geographical sections (even if this reviewer's opinion is that it gets much better north of York!).

★★★ **MB**

Loco Motion The world's oldest steam locomotives

By Dr. Michael R. Bailey. Published by The History Press. 216pp, 223 b/w photographs and drawings, 37 colour. Softback, ISBN 978 1 80399 963 0. £25.00

This book in its original form was published eleven years ago, very well used by me as an accurate reference, and has been a firm favourite on my bookshelves and has been well thumbed. The reissuing of the book now is to update the story about early steam locomotives to celebrate S&D 200 towards the end of 2025.,

The characteristic that is so striking about Michael Bailey's work is the thoroughness with which he operates as an author.

The new version of *Loco Motion* that is now being offered with updated text in relation to replica early locomotives. It will have been available to help audiences at the S&D know what they are seeing and know what really happened in those early heady days of the successful steam locomotive becoming accepted as a reality.

The text of the book is very similar to the original, but I am hoping that this second updated version will help put right some of the common misconceptions that still abound in relation to early steam locomotives within the preserved railway scene.

For example, I was up in Darlington recently on non-railway business and chatting to the taxi driver about the forthcoming railway celebrations in the autumn. The taxi driver stated that he was keen to see Stephenson's *Rocket* taking part in the re-enactment celebrations back where it belonged! Unusually for me, I kept my mouth shut!

Of course, the really spectacular progress that should be celebrated this autumn will have been the updated replica of George Stephenson's *Locomotion* performing on Network Rail, pulling a replica train of chauldron waggons and a passenger carriage *Experiment* between Darlington and Shildon – a considerable achievement in the preservation world and should be celebrated.

The book covers the period 1803 to 1850 nominally but includes up to date information on recent replica locomotives. If you are an early steam enthusiast and haven't already got this book in your collection, I urge you to invest in Michael Bailey's new book which is accurate, informative and a pleasure to have on your shelves.

★★★★★ **RG**

Uckfield's Railways – Triumph and Tragedy

By Brian Hart, Wild Swan Books Ltd., ISBN 978 1 912038 97 8 288pp, £39.95

On handing over the package containing this book my postman commented he was pleased to be relieved of it at the beginning of the round rather than having to cart it any further. Not untypical of this publisher's volumes it is of large format on heavy, gloss paper. I have to say that with this in my hands I wondered how a railway serving a town of fewer than 15,000 people could provide this much to write about. I was wrong, of course. Uckfield is the peg on which the history of lines in the trapezoidal area of Sussex, roughly bounded by the Brighton Line south Redhill to the west, and the secondary route between Oxted and Eastbourne via Heathfield to the east, is hung. The line to Uckfield from Lewes was first on the scene, though twelve years elapsed between the official proposal and its opening in October 1858. The next route would have connected Uckfield directly to the London–Brighton line of 1841, the Ouse Valley Railway being authorised in opposition to a route to Brighton surprisingly sponsored jointly by the SER and LCDR. The latter, of course, made no progress and though work at various points along the OVR had been started, the lack of need to continue with it halted progress, leaving Uckfield 'in the cold'. The extended bridge piers each side of Borde Hill Lane, south of the Ouse Valley Viaduct are among the most obvious of these works. Thereafter the build-up of every line – planned, built or failed to be and opened – is recorded in meticulous detail as is its unfortunate demise – and not always due to Dr. Beeching – until only the two branches south of Oxted now open are all that is left.

What makes this book fascinating is the wealth of information provided by the original correspondence between parties that gives some idea of the pressure for and equally opposition to them faced by many lines in early days, and the 'hoops' companies had to jump through to get their lines authorised. Diagrams of station layouts and mapped changes required to roads for the routes to go through, all taken from original documents, are plentiful and supported by a wealth of excellently reproduced photographs. Mr. Hart's wide researches are perhaps best illustrated by the list of those correspondents acknowledged in small print that occupies fully a third of the opening page. Despite the scholarship that has gone into it I feel the book may have limited appeal in view of the relatively small area it covers, and the price for which, nevertheless, I believe, it is worth. For as a work it sets an extraordinary standard that, as a research tool for example, could not, I think, be bettered.

★★★★★ **JC**

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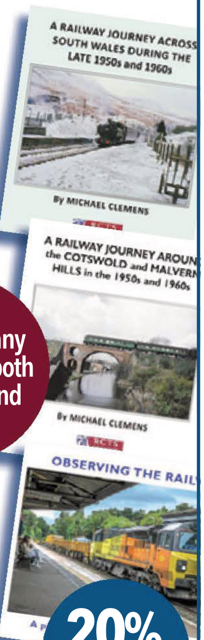
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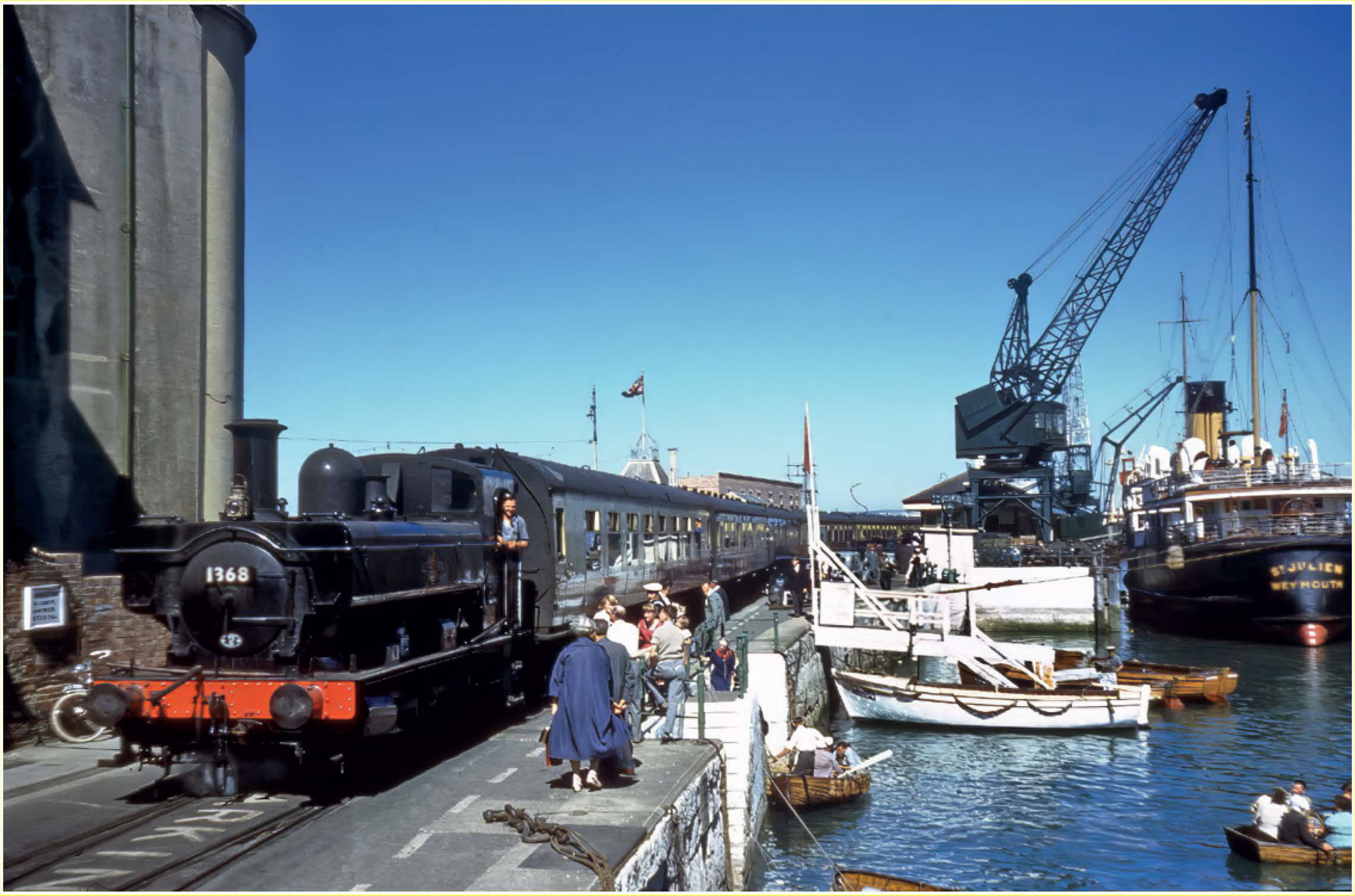

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS AT WEYMOUTH

Summer holidays gone by – Great Western Railway '1366' 0-6-0PT No.1368 creeps gingerly through the pedestrians and parked cars on Weymouth Quay with a Channel Islands boat train in July 1959. Tied up at the pier is the TSS *St. Julien,* built for the GWR by John Brown & Co. at Clydebank in 1925 for the Channel Islands sailings from Weymouth; she acted as a hospital ship during World War II and lasted in service until 1960.
(Trevor Owen/Colour-Rail.com BRW631)

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